



THE LONG 1989

DECADES OF GLOBAL REVOLUTION

EDITED BY

PIOTR H. KOSICKI AND
KYRILL KUNAKHOVICH

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Piotr H. Kosicki
and
Kyrill Kunakhovich



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*For a long time we did not fully understand
the revolution of which we were witnesses;
for a long time, we took it to be an event.*

We were mistaken; it was an epoch.

Joseph de Maistre

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Introduction

Piotr H. Kosicki and Kyrill Kunakhovich

In February 2011, as crowds took to the streets across the Arab world, Egyptian activist Maha Azzam declared that “this could be our 1989: the moment we will see the collapse of a series of authoritarian regimes, one after another.”¹ Two years later, one of the leaders of Ukraine’s Euromaidan movement used a similar analogy, linking the fall of Kyiv’s Lenin statue to the fall of the Berlin Wall. “After destroying this symbol of totalitarianism, we can start the process of building spiritual and national unity, just as in Germany,” Oleh Tyahnybok proclaimed.² In Sofia in 2013, anti-regime activists built their own Berlin Wall out of cardboard boxes, inscribed it with the names of Bulgarian politicians, and then knocked it down.³ In Beirut in 2015, when the Lebanese government put up a concrete wall to ward off protests, someone covered the blocks with graffiti and scribbled the word “Berlin.”

The revolutions of 1989, to paraphrase Faulkner, are clearly not dead, and they are not even past. The fall of communism in Central and Eastern Europe is now the frame of reference for any mass mobilization, from the Arab Spring to the Occupy movement to Brexit. But it is also more than that. While journalists duly point out why 1989 cannot be repeated, the men and women in the streets continue to invoke it. The events of 1989 still feature as a guide and motivation for political change, in places as diverse as Cairo and Kyiv. To many, the events of 1989 are not historical examples,

¹ Quoted in Mary Fitzgerald, “This Could Be Our 1989,” *The Irish Times*, February 5, 2011, <http://www.irishtimes.com/news/this-could-be-our-1989-1.564540>.

² Quoted in Dmitry Gordon, “Tyagnibok nazval snesennyy pamyatnik Leninu ‘berlinskoy stenoy’ Ukrainy,” GordonUA.com, December 10, 2013, <http://m.gordonua.com/amp/news/maidan/Tyagnibok-nazval-nizverzhennyy-pamyatnik-Lenin-berlinskoy-stenoy-Ukrainy-2385.html>; see also Marci Shore, *The Ukrainian Night: An Intimate History of Revolution* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2018).

³ Quoted in “Bulgarian Demo Builds Berlin Wall in Thanks,” *The Local*, July 17, 2013, <https://www.thelocal.de/20130717/50919>.

but markers of ongoing struggle. Just as generations of radicals worked to complete the French Revolution, so contemporary protesters—including Azzam and Tyahnybok—speak of achieving “their” belated 1989. That date has turned into an idea—what Ralf Dahrendorf once termed simply “the revolution in Europe”—which still retains its power to mobilize and inspire.⁴ Throughout this work, we refer to that idea in quotation marks, as “nineteen eighty-nine.”⁵ Even after thirty years, the idea continues to exercise agency on a world-historical scale, having far outlived the events themselves.

This book is about the slow, uneven spread of “nineteen eighty-nine” across the world. Its nine chapters consider how revolutionary events in Europe resonated years later and thousands of miles away: in China and South Africa, Chile and Afghanistan, Turkey and the USA. They trace the circulation of people, practices, and concepts that linked these countries, turning local developments into a global phenomenon. It is now a platitude to call 1989 a “world event,” but the chapters in this volume show how it actually became one. At the same time, they examine the many shifts that revolution underwent in transit. All nine chapters detail the process of mutation, adaptation, and appropriation through which foreign affairs gained meaning on the ground. They interrogate the uses and understandings of “nineteen eighty-nine” in particular national contexts, often many years after the fact. Taken together, the chapters in this volume ask how the fall of communism in Europe became the basis for revolutionary action around the globe. They invite us to rethink the revolutions of 1989 by expanding their chronological and geographic scope.

In 1989, as in 1848, mobility was the key feature of the *annus mirabilis*. Newspaper reports described the revolutions as a force of nature: a “wave,” an “avalanche,” a “hurricane,” “a swelling tide.”⁶ Protests spread swiftly from one country to the next, hot on the heels of news reports that modeled and emboldened civic action. All histories of 1989 identify this “domino effect,” but most stop following it at Europe’s borders.⁷ Only a handful

⁴ Ralf Dahrendorf, *Reflections on the Revolution in Europe* (New York: Random House, 1990).

⁵ Krishan Kumar, *1989: Revolutionary Ideas and Ideals* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), esp. 104–41, 215–56; Mary Kaldor, *Global Civil Society: An Answer to War* (Oxford: Wiley, 2013), ch. 3.

⁶ All of these descriptions are taken from the *New York Times*. R.W. Apple, “Amid Winds of Change, A Summit Conference,” November 8, 1989: A20; Flora Lewis, “Welcome the New Horizon,” December 31, 1989: E11; Craig Whitney, “The Choices for Germans,” October 28, 1989: 1.

⁷ Among the many transnational histories of 1989, see Timothy Garton Ash, *The Magic Lantern: The Revolution of ’89 Witnessed in Warsaw, Budapest, Prague, and Berlin* (New York: Random House, 1990); Padraic Kenney, *A Carnival of Revolution: Central Europe 1989* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002); Stephen

of scholars have explored its impact on the breakup of the Soviet Union; even fewer trace it further, to China, Yugoslavia, and the rest of the socialist world.⁸ In studies that take a broader, global lens, the revolutions of 1989 are often overshadowed by their aftermath. Even recent works on “the global 1989” focus on the world it made, examining the nature of the post-Cold War order.⁹ In most accounts, the year 1989 is less an object of study than a dividing line between “the short twentieth century” and the present day. It marks both “an end and a beginning,” but it remains a bounded event, confined to a specific time and place.¹⁰

This volume takes a different approach. As scholars of revolution remind us, sudden upheavals are the signposts of gradual change.¹¹ Their meaning only becomes apparent in a wider timeframe, such as an “era” or an “age.”¹²

Kotkin, with a contribution by Jan T. Gross, *Uncivil Society: 1989 and the Implosion of the Communist Establishment* (New York: Modern Library, 2009); Mary Elise Sarotte, 1989: *The Struggle to Create Post-Cold War Europe* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009); Victor Sebestyen, *Revolution 1989: The Fall of the Soviet Empire* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2009).

⁸ See, for instance, Mark R. Beissinger, *Nationalist Mobilization and the Collapse of the Soviet State: A Tidal Approach to the Study of Nationalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Padraic Kenney, 1989: *Democratic Revolutions at the Cold War's End: A Brief History with Documents* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2010); Nina Bandelj and Dorothy Solinger, eds., *Socialism Vanquished, Socialism Challenged: Eastern Europe and China, 1989–2009* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); Martin K. Dimitrov, ed., *Why Communism Did Not Collapse: Understanding Authoritarian Regime Resilience in Asia and Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013). For a now-canonical reconstruction of cross-regional “spillover” from the dissolving Soviet Bloc, see Mark Kramer, “The Collapse of East European Communism and the Repercussions within the Soviet Union”, *Journal of Cold War Studies*: Part I—5, no. 4 (2003): 178–256; Part II—6, no. 4 (2004): 3–64; Part III—7, no. 1 (2005): 3–96.

⁹ George Lawson, Chris Armbruster, and Michael Cox, eds., *The Global 1989: Continuity and Change in World Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010). See also Jacques Rupnik, ed., *1989 as a Political World Event: Democracy, Europe and the New International System in the Age of Globalization* (London: Routledge, 2013).

¹⁰ Vladimir Tismaneanu and Bogdan Iacob, eds., *The End and the Beginning: The Revolutions of 1989 and the Resurgence of History* (Budapest–New York: CEU Press, 2002).

¹¹ Seen through the lens of Czechoslovakia in 1989: James Krapfl, *Revolution with a Human Face: Politics, Culture, and Community in Czechoslovakia, 1989–1992* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2013).

¹² See, for instance, Frederic Seebohm, *Era of the Protestant Revolution* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1875); Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Revolution, 1789–1849* (New York: New American Library, 1962).

Writing five years after the French Revolution began, Joseph de Maistre—one of its staunchest critics—reflected on its spread: “for a long time we did not fully understand the revolution of which we were witnesses; for a long time, we took it to be an event. We were mistaken; it was an epoch.”¹³ Drawing on this insight, the present volume explores the notion of a “long 1989.”¹⁴ Each chapter looks beyond the year itself to consider the causes and consequences of the fall of communism in Europe. In addition, each chapter looks beyond Europe, examining the international networks that inspired and transported revolution. Our authors agree that a broad chronology lays bare the global reach of “nineteen eighty-nine,” and vice versa. By tracing the diffusion of revolution spatially as well as temporally, they highlight its enduring power—both discursive and material.

The volume is divided into three parts. Part One, “Politics and Policies,” examines the dynamics of regime change in and around 1989. The essays in this section consider three major regions: Africa, the Middle East, and East Asia. Each essay explores the linkages between one of these regions and the Soviet Bloc, tracing transcontinental flows of information and influence. All four authors uncover the mechanisms of diffusion that turned a European crisis into a global phenomenon.¹⁵ They show how governments learned from one another, and how opposition activists built on foreign models to advance their cause. At the same time, these essays highlight structural commonalities between Central and Eastern Europe (some of our authors prefer the term “East-Central Europe” to describe the same region)¹⁶ and the rest of the world, placing the fall of communism within a global framework.¹⁷ The revolutions of 1989, they argue, were both causes

¹³ Joseph de Maistre, “Discours à Mme la marquise de Costa,” in *Œuvres*, vol. 2 (Paris: A. Vaton, 1851), 76–77.

¹⁴ For a similar approach to a different revolutionary year, see Daniel Sherman, Ruud van Dijk, Jasmine Alinder, and A. Aneesh, eds., *The Long 1968: Revisions and New Perspectives* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013). The concept of “the long 1989” also appears, in a different context, in Joshua Clover, *1989: Bob Dylan Didn’t Have This to Sing About* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009).

¹⁵ On the notion of diffusion, see Mark R. Beissinger, “Structure and Example in Modular Political Phenomena: The Diffusion of Bulldozer/Rose/Orange/Tulip Revolutions,” *Perspectives on Politics* 5, no. 2 (June 2007): 259–76.

¹⁶ On “Central and Eastern Europe,” “East-Central Europe,” and the challenges of establishing a consistent nomenclature for the region, see Timothy Garton Ash, “The Puzzle of Central Europe,” *New York Review of Books*, March 18, 1999.

¹⁷ For similar approaches, see Kenney, 1989; Guillermo O’Donnell and Philippe Schmitter, *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Tentative Conclusions about Uncertain Democracies* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986); Sergio Bitar and Abraham Lowenthal, eds., *Democratic Transitions: Conversations with World Leaders* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2015).

and consequences of a broader political realignment, one that began in the 1970s and stretched into the twenty-first century.

Adrian Guelke and Tom Junes explore the global entanglements of “nineteen eighty-nine,” connecting two seemingly distant phenomena: the fall of communism in Poland and the end of apartheid in South Africa. Guelke and Junes observe that structural commonalities “facilitated strikingly similar developments in both countries.” In Poland as in South Africa, political change came after peaceful negotiations between a morally charged opposition movement and a government facing a crisis of legitimacy. As the authors show, these parallels stemmed partly from a “copycat effect”: anti-apartheid activists paid close attention to Central and Eastern European protests, and sought to emulate their tactics. Observation and imitation helped spread revolution from Poland to South Africa, producing “a transnational moment of change.”¹⁸

Věra Exnerová’s chapter considers how this “moment” affected Central Asia and the Middle East. The Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan in 1989 was followed two years later by the collapse of Soviet power in Central Asia. Across the region, communism gave way to a new transnational ideology: Islamism. Exnerová’s account is based on ethnographic work conducted in Afghanistan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan. It shows that Islamist movements arose from internal power struggles within Muslim societies, rather than in opposition to communist rule. As a result, these power struggles continued after the Soviet collapse, prolonging instability across the region. Exnerová situates the fall of communism in Central Asia within a broader narrative of religious contestation. The rise of Central Asian Islamism, she argues, was a key feature of the “long 1989.”

Finally, Martin Dimitrov’s contribution tracks the spread of “nineteen eighty-nine” to the People’s Republic of China (PRC). Drawing on archival research in three countries, Dimitrov describes an extended chain reaction involving leaders of the Soviet Union, the Soviet Bloc, and the PRC. In May 1989, Mikhail Gorbachev’s visit to Beijing emboldened protestors in Tiananmen Square; the PRC’s crackdown on the Tiananmen protests inspired Romanian and Albanian leaders to follow the “Chinese Scenario”; and the fall of communism in Europe convinced Chinese officials to launch major domestic reforms. Dimitrov demonstrates that the events of 1989 left a lasting imprint on the PRC. To avoid revolution, the Chinese leadership resolved to embrace high economic growth, suppress political pluralism, and mitigate ethnic tensions. These principles have subsequently made China a model for other authoritarian regimes, including Vladimir Putin’s

¹⁸ Here Guelke and Junes draw on Gerd-Rainer Horn and Padraic Kenney, eds., *Transnational Moments of Change: Europe 1945, 1968, 1989* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2004).

Russia. By showing how governments learn from one another, Dimitrov highlights their ability to contain revolutionary flows.

The essays in this section reveal the worldwide reach of revolution, as well as its ambiguous effects. Thanks to parallel institutional structures, copycat tactics, and the growing transnational entanglements of national and regional actors, the fall of communism in Europe reverberated across the globe. At the same time, however, its impact was anything but uniform. As our authors show, upheaval in Europe weakened apartheid in South Africa but strengthened dictatorships in China and the Middle East. Remarkably, it also empowered both neoliberalism and Islamism, transforming regional movements into global ideologies. The revolutions of 1989 came to mean different things in different settings: they were always refracted through the prism of long-term trends, local conditions, and political concerns. These findings complicate the standard narratives of 1989, such as Samuel Huntington's "third wave of democratization."¹⁹ They point to a global moment of change that featured multiple interconnecting revolutions.

Part Two, "Ideas and Ideologies," turns to the intellectual dimension of 1989. Writing ten years after the fact, Timothy Garton Ash could find no "big new ideas" that emerged from communism's collapse, nothing "to compare with '*liberté, égalité, fraternité*' of 1789."²⁰ The essays in this section revisit that claim, asking what ideas fueled radical action in Central and Eastern Europe and beyond. All three authors examine concepts that gained currency in 1989: "dialogue," "human rights," and "the rule of law." They consider how these concepts contributed to the fall of communism, and how they were changed by it. Over the past thirty years, the words and ideas of "nineteen eighty-nine" have provided a ready-made toolkit for activists around the world. Even if they were not entirely "new," they have transformed both the language and the practice of revolution.

Jeffrey Stout's chapter takes up the concept of dialogue, popularized in Central and Eastern Europe by the Polish dissident Adam Michnik. As Stout demonstrates, Michnik borrowed this notion from Martin Luther King, Jr., who had embraced dialogue as a political strategy during the US Civil Rights Movement. For King, dialogical politics required treating opponents as partners, in the hope of promoting nonviolence and reconciliation. Michnik used it to find common ground between secular and Catho-

¹⁹ Samuel Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late 20th Century* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991).

²⁰ Timothy Garton Ash, "Conclusions," in *Between Past and Future: The Revolutions of 1989 and Their Aftermath*, ed. Sorin Antohi and Vladimir Tismăneanu (Budapest–New York: CEU Press, 1999), 397; for contrasting views, see, for instance, Kumar, 1989; Kaldor, *Global Civil Society*.

lic intellectuals in Poland, building a coalition that sustained the Solidarity movement of the 1980s. He rejected both secularism and theocracy as “analogous forms of domination,” and advocated instead for a dialogical democracy that would be “secular but not secularist.” Stout suggests that this vision may offer a way out of the American culture wars, which continue to pit secularism against religious authority. Having played a central role in 1989, the notion of dialogical politics may yet find even greater resonance in the twenty-first century.

István Rév builds on the theme of nonviolence, showing how the notion of human rights tempered the appeal of radical politics in 1989. His chapter traces a growing distaste for social experiments—Garton Ash’s “big new ideas”—in favor of a “liberal democracy under the rule of law.” This distaste, Rév argues, emerged from interactions between the two halves of Europe, which observed each other closely. The Soviet suppression of the Prague Spring in 1968 led intellectuals across both the East and the West to rethink the long legacy of the French Revolution. In France particularly, it spurred critiques of all collectivist utopias and fed the rise of a more individualist idea, human rights. As that idea took root in Central and Eastern Europe, it encouraged protestors to avoid violence or extremism, ensuring that the events of 1989 remained largely peaceful. Rév commends Central and Eastern European revolutionaries for the “heroic act of not experimenting with dangerous ideas.” In so doing, he argues, they created a new model of regime change that has been widely emulated by other social movements.

Martin Krygier picks up where Rév leaves off, exploring the emergence of an “international rule of law promotion industry.” As he shows, the notion of the rule of law gained wide currency after 1989, as newly democratic states in Central and Eastern Europe looked to rebuild their legal systems after communism. The rule of law appealed to them because it was associated with the West and taken to be “normal.” Like human rights, it was attractive in its modesty, eschewing grand, utopian experiments in favor of the tried and true. However, for the Western advisors who streamed into Central and Eastern Europe in the 1990s, the rule of law became “a doctrine to sell.” It was bundled with free elections and free markets into a “confident triumphal package for export,” offered to—and sometimes imposed on—“transitional” countries around the world. The results of this one-size-fits-all approach have been mixed at best, but Krygier sees a silver lining. Past failures, he argues, can serve as cautionary tales about “how complex and variable are the ways of attaining the values of the rule of law”—and hence allow rule of law promotion to break out of its post-1989 paradigm.

Taken together, these three essays reveal the global circulation of revolutionary thought. They remind us how many of the big ideas that ani-

mated Central and Eastern Europe in 1989 were borrowed from the West, and also highlight these ideas' long history: in the cases of "dialogue" and "human rights," for instance, the vocabulary of revolution emerged well before the revolution itself. Any account of 1989 must consider these distant origins, but must also look ahead. As all three essays show, language elaborated in Central and Eastern Europe continues to spread across the world today. It has profoundly shaped our public discourse, from legal codes and academic texts to political programs. As a result, 1989 has supplanted 1789 or 1917 as the paradigmatic revolution of our time. In the midst of the Arab Spring, Timothy Garton Ash exhorted students of international politics, "Forget 1917, 1848, or 1789. There is no longer any doubt that 1989 has become the early twenty-first century's default model and metaphor for revolution."²¹ Its core ideas, lexicon, and tactics now serve as archetypes of revolutionary action.

Indeed, "nineteen eighty-nine" has become an idea in its own right. The essays in Part Three, "Myths and Mythmaking," explore its meanings and interpretations over three decades of rupture in world politics. For protestors from Cairo to Kyiv, 1989 has offered proof that peaceful assembly can dislodge the most repressive governments. For social movements like Occupy Wall Street, it has epitomized the force of popular mobilization: "people power." In other contexts, it has marked the end of the Cold War, the triumph of liberalism, and the global ascendance of the United States. These three essays consider how the fall of communism in Europe has been remembered and misremembered, used and abused. They chronicle the process of mythmaking that has made "nineteen eighty-nine" into a political slogan.

Samuel Helfont examines one of the first and most enduring readings of 1989: as "the end of history." Writing at the time of Central and Eastern Europe's revolutions, Francis Fukuyama argued that liberal democracy had made other political visions obsolete. This idea shaped a whole generation of US scholars and policymakers, including the architects of the 2003 invasion of Iraq. Helfont describes how their belief in democracy's inevitable rise influenced strategy on the ground, often with disastrous results. This, in turn, inspired a spirited critique from both realist and postmodernist theorists, spurring the very "battle of ideas" that Fukuyama had declared finished. Still, Helfont demonstrates that the assumptions behind Fukuyama's thesis continue to color popular perceptions of the Middle East today. Only by reassessing the events of 1989, he contends, can we come to understand the region and its dynamics.

²¹ Timothy Garton Ash, "Not 1989. Not 1789. But Egyptians can learn from other revolutions," *The Guardian*, February 9, 2011, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2011/feb/09/egypt-can-learn-from-europe-revolutions>.

Mehmet Döşemeci's chapter turns to the Arab Spring, showing why the experience of 1989 led many observers to misread the protests. The fall of communism, he argues, promoted a particular idea of revolution: a mass social movement seeking to install democracy. By this token, demonstrations in Egypt and Turkey seemed to fall short of the mark—and also looked different from demonstrations in Madrid or New York City. For Döşemeci, though, all of these protests were part of a new global phenomenon, which he calls the “politics of social arrest.” Across the world, citizens unhappy with their government began to occupy public space, forming “semi-permanent sites of protest.” These sites were not just means but ends of revolution, for it was here that “an organic society” instituted itself “in democratic fashion.” Döşemeci views such protests as a response to the events of 1989, which created an uninhibited unipolar order. It is also the myth of “nineteen eighty-nine,” he holds, that has obscured the protests' novelty and significance.

Finally, Valeria Korablyova considers how the memory of 1989 influenced Ukraine's 2014 revolution, widely known as the Maidan or Euromaidan. In interviews conducted on the streets of Kyiv, activists drew parallels to the fall of the Berlin Wall and discussed the importance of solidarity. Commentators, too, often saw the Euromaidan as a belated break with Russia, arguing that Ukraine had finally rejected Soviet legacies in favor of the democratic West. Yet Korablyova shows that such conclusions were misguided, for the Maidan went far beyond an East-West split. Instead, she argues, it reflected a different legacy of 1989: the emergence of a new form of democracy, which “presupposes a bigger role for civil society while restraining the state.” In Korablyova's chapter, we find echoes in the Euromaidan of the same ethos that Mehmet Döşemeci reveals within the global Occupy movement. In twenty-first-century Ukraine, however, this ethos derived self-consciously from key theorists of the Central and Eastern European revolutions of 1989: above all, from Václav Havel and Jan Patočka. Ukrainians thereby critiqued not just post-communist corruption, but indeed political liberalism itself. Instead, they championed a “civic democracy” that would fulfill the radical promise of “nineteen eighty-nine.”

All three of these essays highlight 1989's enduring resonance. From presidents of the United States to protestors in Tahrir Square, political actors continue to draw analogies and inspiration from that year's events. Moreover, they speak of realizing its full potential: of extending the goals and principles of the Central and Eastern European revolutions to the rest of the world.

Defining those goals and principles, however, is no simple matter. As this book goes to press (summer 2019), many of the values touted in 1989 seem under attack across the globe: civic pluralism, self-organization, soli-

curity, even humanism. Francis Fukuyama's 1989 contention that liberalism's triumph had assured history's end—while more nuanced and powerful than many critics have acknowledged²²—has never seemed as wide of the mark as it does in the world of 2019. As our authors point out, Viktor Orbán, Vladimir Putin, Donald Trump, and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan are all, in many ways, self-appointed vanquishers of the post-Cold War order. And yet, like so many others before them, these politicians draw upon and instrumentalize the myth of 1989, bending its interpretation to their purposes. That myth has now become as real as the revolutions themselves, and even more influential. Even thirty years on—and even in circumstances that seem to spell their undoing—the revolutions of 1989 continue.

²² Francis Fukuyama, "The End of History?" *National Interest* 16 (Summer 1989): 3–18.

PART ONE:
POLITICS AND POLICIES

CHAPTER 1

1989 Compared and Connected: The Demise of Communism in Poland and Apartheid in South Africa*

Adrian Guelke and Tom Junes

The events of the “global 1989” can be understood in two ways. The first involves acknowledging that the collapse of communism in Central and Eastern Europe had global implications, in that it influenced politics practically everywhere. The second is the perception of the events of 1989 as constituting a transnational moment of change. In this sense, the collapse of communism was part of an interrelated series of events encompassing Latin America, Asia, and Africa, which—following Samuel P. Huntington—scholars and pundits have come to describe as a “wave of democratization” engulfing successive regions of the world.¹

As far as the first interpretation is concerned, Poland’s centrality to the events of 1989 scarcely requires justification. Poland was at the very heart of the largely peaceful revolution that ended communist rule throughout the Soviet Bloc in 1989. Indeed, Poland provided a model for the rest of the Bloc and, ultimately, the Soviet Union itself. Prior to the changes in Poland, the transformation of the region and the total collapse of communist rule had seemed unimaginable.

In the case of South Africa, the significant role played by 1989 in the transition from apartheid to democracy is widely accepted by historians of the country’s transformation, and is well documented.² However, this con-

* An earlier version of this chapter was published under a Creative Commons license as Adrian Guelke and Tom Junes, “‘Copycat Tactics’ in Processes of Regime Change: The Demise of Communism in Poland and Apartheid in South Africa,” *Critique & Humanism* 40, special issue (2012): 171–92.

¹ Compare Samuel P. Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991); with, for example, Jarle Simensen, “The Global Context of 1989,” in *Transnational Moments of Change: Europe 1945, 1968, 1989*, ed. Gerd-Rainer Horn and Padraic Kenney (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2004), 157–72, at 158.

² See Adrian Guelke, “The Impact of the End of the Cold War on the South African Transition,” *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 14, no. 1 (1996): 87–100.

nection received scant mention in contemporary media accounts of the ongoing transition. These understandably focused on punctuated, telegenic events internal to South Africa, such as Nelson Mandela's release from prison and the opening of formal negotiations with the African National Congress.

Indeed, relatively little has been written on how 1989 impacted the domestic politics of states geographically distant from Central and Eastern Europe. Therefore, this chapter will focus on this "transnational" dimension of 1989, and will ascertain whether domestic political events leading to the respective demises of communism and apartheid were in some way connected. To the best of our knowledge, this chapter is the first such undertaking to examine systematically the transnational story of the Soviet Bloc and South Africa. Some comparative work has specifically invoked parallels between Poland and South Africa, but this literature concentrates above all on the post-communist and post-apartheid transitional periods.³

In searching for transnational, intercontinental linkages between the Soviet Bloc's exit from communism and South Africa's departure from apartheid, one is confronted with a distinct set of methodological problems. In opposite hemispheres, and with little in common in terms of demographics, geography, climate, or history, the two societies are not obvious candidates for transnational linkage. Furthermore, whereas the Polish case was absolutely at the heart of Cold War geography, the primary point of reference for the South African case was the dynamics of decolonization in Africa.⁴ Moreover, the "race paradigm," which is so prominent in South African historiography, has often been presumed to complicate broad comparative or connective analysis. However, the revisionist school of South African historians have amply demonstrated the feasibility of putting race analysis and class analysis into productive conversation.⁵

³ It is worth noting that a comparative approach to the post-communist and post-apartheid transitions attracted the interest of scholars from Poland and South Africa. See Ursula van Beek, ed., *South Africa and Poland in Transition: A Comparative Perspective* (Pretoria: HSRC Publishers, 1995); Edmund Wnuk-Lipiński, ed., *Values and Radical Social Change: Comparing Polish and South-African Experience* (Warsaw: Institute of Political Studies, Polish Academy of Sciences, 1998).

⁴ Frederick Cooper, *Africa since 1940: The Past of the Present* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

⁵ The revisionist school of South African historians took a critical view of the race paradigm in South African historiography in favor of class analysis, transferring the focus from the race paradigm to presenting the oppressed non-whites as constituting the exploited class. See, for example, Dan O'Meara, *Forty Lost Years: The Apartheid State and the Politics of the National Party, 1948–1994* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1996).

Pursuing first comparison and then analysis of transnational influence, this chapter will underscore the range of connections between the Soviet Bloc (represented by Poland in this study) and South Africa. We begin by laying out parallel narratives of the demise of communism in Poland and of apartheid in South Africa. As will be evident from the separate descriptions of the two transitions, there are striking structural commonalities in the trajectory that the two countries followed. These commonalities invite an obvious question: were the events in these two distinct regions somehow more connected? This chapter will then assess the degree to which transnational contacts, linkages, or exchanges actually existed. As this analysis will show, there is little evidence of direct contact or exchange prior to, or during, 1989. Nevertheless, the events of 1989 in the Soviet Bloc had a seminal influence on the events in South Africa, through the diffusion of a mediatized mythology of 1989. The perception of 1989 by part of the South African opposition in the early 1990s—when the armed struggle had been abandoned and the opposition was already negotiating with the apartheid regime—led South African communists, in particular, to press for a peaceful end to apartheid. The eagerness to pursue tactics similar to those observed in the Soviet Bloc amounted to what we term a “copycat effect,” in which one side mimicked what they understood to have taken place in the other. The combination of structural commonalities and the revolutionary myth of 1989 forced a negotiated outcome in South Africa, which was paradoxically similar to Poland’s Round Table negotiations in the spring of 1989.

The Polish Transition

The transition from communism that took place in Poland and the broader Soviet Bloc at the end of the 1980s and early 1990s was influenced by several interacting factors, the roots of which lay a few decades earlier. During the post-World War II period, Poland had seen political upheavals occur on a more regular basis than other countries in the Bloc. Following the communist takeover of Central and Eastern Europe in the immediate postwar years, the most significant change affecting the Soviet Union and its satellite states was the onset of de-Stalinization, culminating in the events of 1956. That year, Poland saw workers’ rebellion, student protest, and a resurgent Roman Catholic Church; together, these factors contributed to the return of a victim of Stalinist purges, Władysław Gomułka, as Party leader.⁶

⁶ For a comprehensive account of the events of 1956 see Paweł Machcewicz, *Rebellious Satellite: Poland 1956*, trans. Maya Latynski (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009).

The Gomulka period was one of relative stability. An informal pact of sorts operated, wherein the populace would stay clear of the political arena, while the regime would guarantee a certain standard of living.⁷ However, de-Stalinization left an ideological void, which the regime filled with nationalist discourse.⁸ As a consequence, the regime came into confrontation with the resurgent Church; this conflict culminated in 1966, the millennial anniversary of both the Polish state and Polish Christendom, which presented the population with an alternative, competing, more deeply internalized worldview.⁹

Moreover, toward the end of the 1960s, the regime was rocked by a wave of opposition, which was predominantly generational in nature. Ironically, the generation that rebelled was the first one to have come of age in the communist era. This generational protest precipitated change in both the Party leadership and its lower echelons in the form of an extensive purge of state and educational institutions. The first moment of this generational rebellion was March 1968, when Poland saw the emergence of a nationwide student protest movement. Although this movement shook the regime, it failed to destabilize communist rule; in fact, it precipitated a repressive reaction not only against the academic milieu, but among the broadly defined intelligentsia. The Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia in August 1968 only exacerbated further the dilemma of Polish intelligentsia and youth. It had become clear that any attempt to reform the post-Stalinist system from within could be halted by Soviet tanks.

Simultaneously, the Polish communist regime faced a serious structural constraint, as the country's economy was showing signs of a downturn in the late 1960s, strained by the postwar demographic boom. When the deteriorating situation forced the government to raise subsidized prices on basic foodstuffs, workers' protest broke out in December 1970. The regime reacted by sending the army in to quell the strikes on the Baltic coast around Gdańsk, but the situation escalated, leading to the deaths of several dozen workers when security forces and the army opened fire on the protesters. This violence led to the downfall of Gomulka, and his replacement by Edward Gierek as first secretary of the Polish United Workers' Party. The protests at the end of the 1960s by a generation of students and workers led

⁷ Jacek Kuroń, *Wiara i Wina* (Warsaw: NOWA, 1990), 172.

⁸ The role of nationalism in defining the politics of revolutionary Marxist regimes has been pointed out in Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 1983). For a more detailed discussion and analysis of this phenomenon in communist Poland, see Marcin Zaremba, *Komunizm, Legitymizacja, Nacjonalizm* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Trio, 2005).

⁹ Compare Antoni Dudek and Ryszard Gryz, *Komuniści i Kościół w Polsce (1945-1989)* (Kraków: Znak, 2006), 234-50; with Piotr H. Kosicki, "Caritas across the Iron Curtain? Polish-German Reconciliation and the Bishops' Letter of 1965," *East European Politics and Societies* 23, no. 2 (2009): 213-43.

to a loss of faith in socialism among this generation, which had grown up and come into adulthood knowing no other way of life.¹⁰

In reaction to the workers' protests, the new communist leadership withdrew the price hikes and soothed the population with a new economic policy, predicated on providing more consumer goods, which were funded by loans from the West. This policy went hand in hand with a more "liberal" openness, allowing Polish citizens to travel to the West.¹¹ Despite its introduction of consumerism, the regime simultaneously tried to pull in the ideological reins by amending the Polish constitution, among other means.¹² However, the economy once again helped to bring down the Party's first secretary. The oil shocks that began in 1973 initially motivated Gierek to turn to foreign loans, but the impediments of state planning pushed the economy to the brink of collapse. The regime once again attempted to raise the prices of basic foodstuffs in June 1976, and again this led to workers' riots. Although the protests were violently suppressed, the regime ultimately decided to withdraw the price hikes once more.¹³

In the wake of the 1976 protests, an organized opposition began to emerge, composed of intellectuals, workers, and students. This process was a direct response to the Helsinki Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe. The outcome of the Helsinki process gave the fledgling opposition movements new arguments—based on a discourse of nonviolence and respect for human rights—with which to counter the regime, since the Soviet Bloc countries had signed the Helsinki "basket three" commitment to respect human and civil rights.¹⁴ This period saw a rapprochement in the opposition milieu between the non-communist Left and Catholic circles.¹⁵ Furthermore, the election of the Archbishop of Kraków, Karol Cardinal Wojtyła, to the papacy in 1978, and his 1979 pilgrimage to Poland, served to invigorate not only the opposition, but

¹⁰ See Tom Junes, "Confronting the 'New Class' in Communist Poland: Leftist Critique, Student Activism and the Origins of the 1968 Student Protest Movement," *Critique: Journal of Socialist Theory* 36, no. 2 (2008): 257–72, at 270–72. For a full account of the events of 1968–1970, see Jerzy Eisler, *Polski Rok 1968* (Warsaw: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, 2006); Jerzy Eisler, *Grudzień '70* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwa Szkolne i Pedagogiczne, 1995).

¹¹ See Kazimierz Poznanski, *Poland's Protracted Transition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 7–10.

¹² See Andrzej Friszke, *Opozycja Polityczna w PRL 1945-1980* (London: Aneks, 1994), 324–32.

¹³ See, for example, Paweł Sasanka, *Czerwiec 1976: Geneza, Przebieg, Konsekwencje* (Warsaw: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, 2006).

¹⁴ Compare with Samuel Moyn, *The Last Utopia: Human Rights in History* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010).

¹⁵ See Jeffrey Stout's chapter in this volume.

also the population at large.¹⁶ Due to the increased international attention this brought to bear on Poland, as well as the country's growing financial dependence on the West, the regime limited its repressive actions against the opposition, which was able to act with growing confidence.

In the summer of 1980, economic conditions precipitated conflict once again. A wave of strikes spread throughout the country as a result of unexpected price hikes. However, this time, the regime did not repeal the measures; instead, it tried to end the strikes by accommodating local demands and grievances. But in August, a conflict at the Lenin Shipyard in Gdańsk turned into a solidarity strike, at which point the workers put forward twenty-one demands, including the right to form independent trade unions. This escalation of the strike movement forced the regime to negotiate with the strikers directly. On August 30, a government delegation reached an accord with the strike committee led by Lech Wałęsa, granting Polish workers the right to form independent and self-governing trade unions. This unprecedented and revolutionary event in the history of the communist world marked the birth of *Solidarność* (Solidarity).¹⁷

Although Solidarity was formally registered as a labor union, in reality it represented a large social movement encompassing a third of the Polish population, roughly ten million people. In the wake of the workers' initiative, private farmers and students also set up their own independent organizations, which the regime was forced to legalize following further strike movements. This social movement was remarkable for its vast scale, alongside the fact that it constituted a united front of workers, farmers, intellectuals, and students enjoying the support of the Church due to its emergence through nonviolent means. However, over the course of 1981, the situation in the country deteriorated. Not only was the economic situation worsening, but the regime, under constant pressure from Moscow to put an end to the "counter-revolution," failed to implement meaningful reforms. This failure, in turn, led to a radicalization of Solidarity. During the night of December 12–13, 1981, the Polish military, led by incumbent Prime Minister and Party leader General Wojciech Jaruzelski, staged a coup d'état, declaring martial law and forming a Military Council of National Salvation.¹⁸

¹⁶ See Friszke, *Opozycja Polityczna w PRL*, 358–582; Dudek and Gryz, *Komuniści i Kościół w Polsce*, 340–47.

¹⁷ See, for example, Roman Laba, *The Roots of Solidarity: A Political Sociology of Poland's Working-class Democratization* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991); and David Ost, *Solidarity and the Politics of Anti-politics: Opposition and Reform in Poland since 1968* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1990).

¹⁸ For a more comprehensive account of the crisis of 1980–1981, see, for example, Timothy Garton Ash, *The Polish Revolution: Solidarity* (New York: Vintage Books, 1985); Jan B. de Weydenthal, Bruce B. Porter and Kevin Devlin, *The Polish Drama: 1980–1982* (Lexington, MA: Lexington Books, 1983).

Martial law put an abrupt end to the “sixteen months of freedom,” but it also signaled the ultimate bankruptcy of the regime. In the wake of the coup d’état, and with the Polish military firmly in control, the government suspended almost all organizations in the country and banned Solidarity, while ordering the incarceration of thousands of opposition activists. Those who avoided arrest went underground. Simultaneously, the military regime endeavored to reanimate the economy and reinstate the Party’s authority, thereby introducing a period of “normalization.” The economic malaise endured, however, as the regime was also targeted by international sanctions that the Soviet Union, itself beginning to experience economic difficulties, could not ameliorate. This reinforced the Polish political crisis, definitively delegitimizing the Party and demoralizing the population. The period of post-martial law normalization was one of gloom, offering little prospect of any improvement in the near future.¹⁹

However, by the mid-1980s, a number of events pointed to the possibility of fundamental change. First, there was a change in the Soviet leadership. The elevation of Mikhail Gorbachev to the post of General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) was a factor that, in the space of a few years, would significantly alter the geopolitical constellation in which the Polish regime functioned. Second, the regime proclaimed a general amnesty, which resulted in the release of the last detainees from the martial law period and a certain relaxation of repression. Finally, the mid-1980s saw generational change, with people coming of age who had not been directly affected by the imposition of martial law and the defeat of Solidarity. This generation was staunchly anti-communist and invigorated by a spirit of rebellion, which stood in contrast to a population that had inherited a general weariness toward any form of political struggle.

These three factors together would lead to the demise of communism in Poland at the end of the decade. Gorbachev embarked upon a program of reforms that culminated in perestroika and glasnost in the Soviet Union, encouraging the satellite states to undertake similar reforms. Simultaneously, he initiated a change in Soviet foreign policy that would have far-reaching consequences. He sought a renewed climate of détente with the West that effectively disengaged the Soviet Union from its military commitments abroad. The most notorious of these was in Afghanistan, but the USSR was also involved in Southern Africa, where minority and colonial regimes were fighting a putative communist onslaught. Gorbachev’s foreign policy, and the fact that the Reagan and Bush administrations were willing

¹⁹ This negative assessment was also shared in regime circles at the time, based on information originating from the Communist security apparatus. See Wojciech Sawicki, *Raport Kiszczaka dla Moskwy* (Kraków: Biblioteka Centrum Dokumentacji Czynu Niepodległościowego, 2002).

to cooperate with him, ultimately ended the Cold War. For Poland, Gorbachev's stance vis-à-vis the satellite states implied that the Soviet Union was no longer willing to support those regimes with its military power.²⁰

By the mid-1980s, the Polish establishment was fully aware of the impasse in which it found itself. On the one hand, martial law had managed to neutralize and effectively paralyze the opposition, but on the other hand, it had failed to restore any credibility to the regime. Crippled by a failing economy and battered by international sanctions, its ruling elite sought a way out of the enduring crisis. In an effort to muster support from the population to introduce serious economic reforms, a referendum was held in 1987. The proposed reforms were, however, rejected by voters—a powerful symbol of the move toward democratization in which Poland was leading the communist bloc. In addition, in the spring and summer of 1988, a series of worker and student strikes broke out calling for the legalization of Solidarity. Although the strikes were on a smaller scale than the 1980 strike wave—they were more localized, and predominantly carried out by a younger generation of workers who had not experienced the Solidarity period first-hand—the regime was unwilling to respond with a general crackdown despite possessing the capacity to do so. Instead, it moved to open a dialogue with representatives of the opposition, mediated by the Church.²¹

What the 1988 strikes had shown, however, was that a new generation of activists had come to the fore. The perceived hopelessness of the normalization period had instilled in them an inclination to rebel, which was enhanced by the continuing reduction of repressive measures by the regime. This allowed for new grassroots movements to emerge as the decade progressed. These social movements differed from preceding opposition movements, both in their actions and the issues they addressed, as well as in the fact that they managed to transcend the Polish context by making effective use of technological advances. Not only did these tactics help the Polish opposition to re-emerge after martial law in the 1980s, but they also had a direct hand in Polish activists' aid to fledgling oppositional movements in other Soviet Bloc countries. Although the post-Solidarity opposition of the 1980s adhered to the nonviolence principle, they were more radical than Solidarity had been, for they ridiculed or bypassed the Polish administration in a way that made it very difficult for the regime to counter them effectively. The main achievements of these movements were that they managed to break through the fear instilled by martial law, reinvigorate the opposition against the regime toward the end of the decade, and

²⁰ See Archie Brown, *The Gorbachev Factor* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).

²¹ Ost, *Solidarity and the Politics of Anti-Politics*, 169–86.

take the struggle beyond the borders of Poland.²² Nevertheless, the opposition did not pose enough of a threat by itself to topple the regime.

Thus, it was against the backdrop of this climate in late 1988 that talks between representatives of the regime and the opposition cautiously sought a way out of the economic and political stalemate. Initially, the regime tried to stall and outmaneuver an opposition that was wary of the proposed dialogue. This approach changed when a live televised debate in November 1988 between Lech Wałęsa and Alfred Miodowicz, the boss of the official trade union, ended unexpectedly in a resounding win for Wałęsa. From this point onward, the regime was forced to take the opposition seriously and so, following a few weeks of preparatory discussions, the official negotiations, which became known as the Round Table talks, started in February 1989 between regime and opposition delegations.

The Round Table talks came to an end in early April with both parties having reached agreement on most of the issues. The most important outcomes were the legalization of Solidarity and the organization of elections to be held two months after the conclusion of the talks. The envisioned elections were to be semi-free, with 65 percent of seats in the *Sejm*, the Polish parliament, reserved for the communists and their allied parties, and 35 percent to be contested freely. In addition, a new second house of Parliament, the Senate, was to be established in which all seats were to be contested freely. The results of these elections were unexpected and represented an unequivocal landslide victory for Solidarity, which had campaigned on behalf of the opposition candidates: it turned out that the opposition had won all the freely contested seats in the *Sejm* and all but one in the Senate, which went to an independent candidate. For the regime, the election outcome constituted a decisive and definitive blow, but it honored the results nonetheless.

The outcome of the elections caught both the regime and opposition by surprise, and the ensuing government formation presented new problems. The regime had sought to use the elections as a pretext to forming a government of national unity under communist control, but the election result had made this plan unworkable. Moreover, the communist hold on power was undermined completely when their so-called satellite parties—the *Zjednoczone Stronnictwo Ludowe* (United People's Front) and *Stronnictwo Demokratyczne* (Democratic Front)—turned on them and entered coalition talks with Solidarity to form a new government. The only possible way out would have been a violent overthrow of the Round Table process, but the regime was unwilling to resort to this option. In order to reassure Moscow,

²² For a detailed account of the opposition in Poland in 1980s and its links to other socialist countries, see Padraic Kenney, *A Carnival of Revolution: Central Europe 1989* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002).

a power-sharing compromise was brokered between the regime and the opposition in the following weeks. The opposition formed a government and provided the prime minister, while the regime provided the president and retained key security posts in the ministerial cabinet. In July, General Jaruzelski was elected president by the newly elected National Assembly, and leading Solidarity activist Tadeusz Mazowiecki was subsequently appointed prime minister in August 1989.²³

In the months following the events in Poland, the communist regimes in the Bloc fell one after another, culminating in the toppling of Romania's Nicolae Ceaușescu in December 1989. The Soviet Union itself would follow barely two years later. By then, Jaruzelski had abdicated as president of Poland, succeeded by Lech Wałęsa, who won the first popular presidential election. Although the legacy of the communist era would continue to cause problems throughout the transitional period in the 1990s and beyond, communism in Poland had for all intents and purposes met its demise by the summer of 1989.

The South African transition

The beginning of the conflict that ended with South Africa's transition to a non-racial democracy in 1994 is commonly dated to 1960, more specifically to March 21 of that year—the date of the Sharpeville massacre, when police opened fire on supporters of the Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC) and killed eighty-nine people.²⁴ The massacre was followed by the declaration of a state of emergency and the proscription of both the PAC and its larger rival, the African National Congress (ANC). Up to this point, movements protesting the policies of the National Party government, elected on a platform of apartheid in 1948, had sought to change the government's policies through nonviolent means, including civil disobedience. The banning of the ANC and PAC closed off this route. However, recourse to armed struggle was only undertaken reluctantly. Thus, in the case of the ANC, the launch of a limited campaign of sabotage took place in December 1961 only after it became evident that it was impossible for the organization to sustain itself as a mass movement in the face of the government's ban. The preference of South Africa's African nationalists for mass mobilization over the violent conspiracies of small groups was reflected in the seizure of op-

²³ See Andrzej Paczkowski, *The Spring Will Be Ours: Poland and the Poles from Occupation to Freedom*, trans. Jane Cave (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003), 402–510.

²⁴ For a full account of the massacre, see Philip Frankel, *An Ordinary Atrocity: Sharpeville and Its Massacre* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001).

portunities for open political activity through surrogates, such as the Black Consciousness Movement in the 1970s and the United Democratic Front (UDF) in the 1980s.

The South African government recovered quickly from the shock of the Sharpeville massacre and the resulting loss of international confidence in the country's stability. Once it was evident that the government's security clampdown had been successful in quelling unrest and marginalizing the demands of African nationalists for negotiations toward a new political path, foreign investors were once again attracted by the potential profits from investing in the country's vast natural resources, particularly minerals. The economy boomed, and the country's economic growth rates were among the highest in the world. Nevertheless, the Sharpeville massacre represented a watershed in the country's political relations with the rest of the world.²⁵ With the ending of European colonial rule in most of Africa, apartheid was increasingly seen as illegitimate. The success of the Civil Rights Movement in the United States also furthered the government's ideological isolation, and contributed powerfully to the sense that the South African government was pursuing policies directly contrary to trends in the rest of the world.

In the 1970s, the country's economic boom ended, and the effectiveness of the security clampdown weakened, as African nationalists found new avenues for mobilizing against the government. The oil shocks, particularly the quadrupling of the price of crude oil in 1973, exposed the rigidity and inflexibility of the apartheid system. The operation of the pass laws, which controlled the movement of black Africans into urban areas, facilitated the exploitation of unskilled workers by reducing their bargaining power. They were vulnerable to being "endorsed out" of the cities and exiled to poverty-stricken rural reserves if they took part in industrial action. However, as employers began to invest in the training of workers, they became reluctant to call in the police to deal with industrial disputes. The enhanced bargaining power of labor was reflected in a wave of strikes in 1973. These strikes were also an indication of the waning effectiveness of the government's security clampdown.

During the 1960s, the main bastion of opposition to the government had been in the English-language universities. The liberal National Union of South African Students (NUSAS) had embarrassed the government by inviting Senator Robert Kennedy to give its annual academic freedom address at the University of Cape Town in 1966. The government was also angered by NUSAS's efforts to forge links with black students in tertiary education in segregated institutions, which the regime had established to

²⁵ See, for example, J. E. Spence, *Republic under Pressure* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965).

justify the imposition of apartheid on the open universities that had not operated a color bar on admissions. It consequently welcomed the insistence of a number of black student leaders that they should create their own organization, independent of NUSAS. That created an opening for the growth of the Black Consciousness Movement. This group was an umbrella for a wide number of different organizations, and provided a useful vehicle for African political mobilization that bypassed the bans on the ANC and the PAC.

When the government sought to impose Afrikaans as the language of instruction in their schools, secondary school students in Soweto, the massive African city on the outskirts of the country's commercial center Johannesburg, revolted. This was in 1976, and the influence of Black Consciousness Movement students on their actions was evident from the outset, as was the fact that neither the ANC nor the PAC had a hand in the revolt. There were, however, other influences, including events in other parts of Southern Africa. The South African regime intervened militarily in Angola when Portugal withdrew from its erstwhile colony without establishing the basis for stable government. There were three liberation movements competing for power in Angola. Their quest for external support turned the civil war into a conflict between the superpowers, though each tended to operate through proxies with their own particular interests in the outcome of the conflict. On one side, apartheid South Africa stood out; on the other, Fidel Castro's Cuba was heavily involved. When the South African government sent in its military forces, it hoped (and expected) to achieve a swift victory that would result in the installation of a new government and, in the process, remove the threat that a hostile government in Angola might pose to South African occupation of South West Africa (Namibia). The failure of South African forces to secure a quick victory undermined the basis of its intervention, which depended on creating a fait accompli that African states would have little choice but to accept, regardless of their opinion of apartheid.

In South Africa's townships, the perception was that South Africa had been defeated in Angola by the Angolans themselves, albeit with strong support from the Cubans. In the process, a blow was struck against the assumption that the regime and its armed forces were invincible. This fit in well with the narrative of the Black Consciousness Movement that solidarity among all those oppressed, as well as confidence in their capabilities, was the key to overcoming apartheid. There was little direct Western involvement in the Angolan civil war, but politically the West appeared to be aligned with the apartheid state, a factor that encouraged some of the National Party government's most radical opponents to draw the conclusion that capitalism and apartheid were inextricably intertwined in South Africa, and even that the fall of apartheid would presage the fall of capitalism.

The Soweto uprising had far-reaching consequences. A security clamp-down followed the revolt, as it had after Sharpeville. The tolerance extended to the Black Consciousness Movement was abruptly ended, which was underscored by the killing of its leading figure, Steve Biko, in police custody in 1977. However, unlike after Sharpeville, the clampdown was not followed by an economic boom. Indeed, the oil shocks of the 1970s contributed to a period of persistent economic stagnation in South Africa. Moreover, with the election of President Carter in the United States at the end of 1976, there was a significant hardening of Western attitudes toward apartheid. In 1977, the United Nations Security Council imposed an arms embargo on South Africa. While this had the perverse consequence of helping South Africa to develop its own major arms industry, it did prevent the government from equipping its air force with up-to-date fighters, which would prove significant in the context of South Africa's continuing involvement in Angola.

Perhaps the most significant consequence of the Soweto revolt was the crisis of confidence it created among South Africa's rulers. After Sharpeville, prime minister Hendrik Verwoerd had brushed aside suggestions that the crisis required a change of course. By contrast, the Soweto uprising reinforced the view that the blueprint for apartheid laid down by Verwoerd required revision far beyond the modifications that his successor, B. J. Vorster, had introduced. Vorster's successor as prime minister, P. W. Botha, went much further. In particular, he acknowledged the need to broaden the regime's base by seeking support for its operations outside the white community. To this end, he introduced a new constitution designed to co-opt the Colored and Indian minorities through the creation of a tricameral parliament. The new arrangements created the appearance of power-sharing, but it was a "sham consociation,"²⁶ since effective power remained in the hands of any party able to command a majority in the (white) House of Assembly. In short, it was not intended to loosen the National Party's grip on the levers of power.

However, the commitment to reform the system had a number of consequences. It helped the right-wing governments that came to power in the West in the late 1970s and early 1980s to justify a shift in policy toward South Africa. They opposed the demand for the imposition of economic sanctions and adopted an approach encapsulated in Chester A. Crocker's phrase, "constructive engagement."²⁷ The commitment to internal reform also freed the South African government to adopt a much more assertive

²⁶ See, for example, Theodor Hanf, Heribert Weiland and Gerda Vierdag, *South Africa: The Prospects of Peaceful Change* (London: Rex Collings, 1981), 419.

²⁷ Chester A. Crocker, "South Africa: Strategy for Change," *Foreign Affairs* 59, no. 2 (1980/1981): 323–51.

policy in Southern Africa. In particular, it sought to destabilize neighboring regimes through direct military action and assistance to rebel movements. The aim was to force these regimes to withdraw their support for South Africa's liberation movements, particularly the ANC, at any level. The alignment of Angola and Mozambique with the Soviet Bloc gave these conflicts a significant Cold War dimension.²⁸

However, in order to make the commitment to internal reform credible, the government was also forced to allow space for political mobilization among the subordinate groups, particularly the Colored and Indian communities it was seeking to co-opt. This created an opening for the establishment of the United Democratic Front, an umbrella organization of anti-apartheid groups within South Africa. Further, the government's labor reforms also contributed to the strengthening of the trade union movement. Some within the National Party saw the changes introduced by the Botha administration as the thin end of the wedge that would ultimately herald the end of white rule. These right-wingers broke away to form the Conservative Party. However, the government was able to secure overwhelming white support in the referendum on the changes. Far more important was the government's failure to secure support within the Colored and Indian communities. There was a widespread boycott of the elections for the new Colored and Indian chambers of parliament, undermining the legitimacy of the new arrangement almost from the outset. To make matters worse, the government's attempts to co-opt the Colored and Indian communities increased the resentment of Africans, especially in the urban areas, over their exclusion from political power and their continuing disenfranchisement. Toward the end of 1984, rent increases sparked a widespread revolt in African townships, plunging the country into a crisis of governability. Despite declaring states of emergency, alongside other measures to restore order through suppression of political activities and organizations, the government failed to regain full control of the country through the rest of the decade. Funerals of activists became occasions for mass mobilization and protest. Another common tactic during this period was the work stay-away, typically organized on a regional basis and centered on one of the country's major cities.

The violence, particularly the manner in which the army was deployed to crush unrest in the country's African townships, prompted fresh international hostility to the system of apartheid and irresistible demands from anti-apartheid movements in the West for their governments to impose

²⁸ Although these countries were not formal members of the Warsaw Pact, Angola received military aid and, moreover, signed a Treaty of Friendship and Co-operation with the Soviet Union in 1976, while Mozambique signed such a treaty in 1977, thereby signifying their *de facto* alignment with the Soviet Bloc.

economic sanctions on South Africa. In the United States of America, Congress passed the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act in 1986 by the necessary two-thirds majority to override President Reagan's veto. In these circumstances, the Botha administration began the process of tentatively exploring the possibilities of negotiations on a new political arrangement involving the ANC. At first, the contacts were kept secret, and the government denounced others within the white community who had reached the conclusion that the ANC's involvement was indispensable and who had made their own contacts with the organization in exile. However, the release of a senior ANC figure, Govan Mbeki, from jail in November 1987 provided a clear public indication of the direction in which the government was moving.

This process was accelerated in 1989 by an extraordinary set of circumstances. When President Botha suffered a stroke at the beginning of the year, he concluded that this meant the end of his political career. As a first step, he gave up his leadership of the National Party. However, when the party rejected the candidate he favored, he refused to stand down as president. This precipitated a power struggle between P. W. Botha and the new leader of the National Party, F. W. de Klerk, until Botha was finally pushed by his cabinet colleagues to resign. In the course of this contest, the security apparatus gave its backing to Botha. When President de Klerk considered how the political impasse he inherited might be ended, it is understandable that he should have rejected the option of another security clampdown. To the surprise of most South African political analysts at the time, he decided on the radical step of liberalizing political activity ahead of negotiations on a new constitution. In February 1990, he announced that the bans on the ANC, the PAC, and the South African Communist Party (SACP) would be lifted, as well as confirming the release of Nelson Mandela from prison. Among the factors that influenced him to follow this course of action, the external environment loomed large. De Klerk recognized that incremental steps of the type his predecessor had undertaken, which included such fundamental reforms as ending controls on the movement of Africans, would be unlikely to secure the lifting of economic sanctions. But even more important as an influence on President de Klerk's thinking—according to his own subsequent testimony—was the fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1989.²⁹

De Klerk's calculation was that the discrediting of communism as a political system, in light of its rejection by the peoples of the Soviet Bloc and the Soviet Union itself, would weaken the ANC simply by virtue of the ANC's longstanding alliance with the SACP. De Klerk also believed that

²⁹ See F. W. de Klerk, *The Last Trek: A New Beginning* (London: Macmillan, 1998), 160–61.

control of the state would provide him with the means to set the terms for negotiations, as well as to determine the parameters of lawful political activity. In the event, he miscalculated the consequences of his actions, and his hopes that any new arrangement would include group rights (effectively giving the white minority a veto in decision-making) were dashed during the course of the country's tumultuous transition to democracy. During the transition, enormous pressure was exerted on the government by non-violent mass action that underscored the indispensability of the ANC to creating an arrangement capable of ending the country's crisis of governability. However, the overall process was far from peaceful. According to the South African Institute of Race Relations, over 16,000 people died between Mandela's release from prison and his inauguration as the country's first president under a democratic system in May 1994.³⁰ The ANC's landslide victory in the 1994 elections created the context for the adoption of a final constitution that reflected its insistence on majority rule in a unitary state.

This was not the outcome that the National Party government had expected when it had embarked on the transition in 1990. The perception of the ANC as a movement rooted in urban areas led the government to underestimate the ANC's ability to secure support throughout the country's rural regions, with the exception of KwaZulu, the stronghold of the Inkatha Freedom Party. The government also failed to anticipate that Nelson Mandela would prove to be such an effective political leader. At the time of his release, a common view was that the political choices forced on Mandela by his role as leader of the ANC would quickly diminish his iconic status. This assumption proved as unwarranted as the government's belief that the ANC would be damaged by its links to the SACP. On the contrary, the changes in Central and Eastern Europe greatly reduced Western concerns over the ANC's alliance with the SACP. Since Western leaders had to live down their own historical relationship with apartheid South Africa, there was a widespread readiness to relegate the ANC's communist associations to the past and regard them as having little contemporary significance. When Mandela became president, transitional arrangements gave places to both the National Party and the Inkatha Freedom Party in a Government of National Unity. However, policy was determined by the ANC majority, and after two years the National Party withdrew from the government. The ANC has remained the principal force in the country since 1994.

³⁰ Monthly totals are given in Elizabeth Sidiropoulos *et al.*, *South Africa Survey 1996/1997* (Johannesburg: South African Institute of Race Relations, 1997), 600.

Comparisons and Connections

As stated at the outset of this chapter, the events of 1989 had global implications, and therefore exerted an impact on politics practically everywhere. This is such a general statement that it might seem almost trivial. However, after discussing the transitions in Poland and South Africa in greater detail, we can draw two general conclusions: firstly, the events of 1989 were the result of a much longer process; secondly, external factors in this process touched the individual countries much more profoundly than has often been noted.

The parallel narratives that we have provided of the exit from communism in Poland and from apartheid in South Africa reveal a series of structural commonalities. The geopolitics of the Cold War era had global implications not only toward its end, but throughout the whole era. The geostrategic positions of both Poland and South Africa were determined by the logic of the Cold War rivalry, in which both were actors of considerable regional significance. Poland was of utmost strategic importance to the Soviet Union in preserving the postwar status quo in Europe. Similarly, there was a disposition in the West to support the South African regime, despite the moral travesty of apartheid, because South Africa constituted “a bastion against communism” in the region. Moreover, the oil shocks of the 1970s, though global, had particularly harsh consequences for Poland and South Africa because the former’s economic policy depended upon loans from the West, while the rising price of oil was a severe strain on the latter’s economy, since the rigidity of the apartheid system made the adoption of new methods of production difficult.

In turn, these external factors served to exacerbate the domestic situation in both countries. The fact that economic crises could not be met with adequate political reforms, rendered impossible by the geopolitical situation’s reinforcement of the respective regimes’ ideological prerogatives, gradually eroded any legitimacy these authoritarian states might have enjoyed among their respective populations. Consequently, the regimes’ elites had to rely on force and coercion to retain control, which in turn led to a loss of faith among these elites themselves in the ideological supremacy of their respective regimes.

Both Poland and South Africa saw the emergence and growth of mass opposition from below, enhanced by a process of generational change. Successive generations coming of age were increasingly disposed to reject the realities of life in both countries. Additionally, both Polish and South African opposition movements adopted a nonviolent discourse on human rights as the basis for their activity. Finally, technological advances facilitated the activity of organized opposition and undermined the respective regimes’ control over information. Both the spreading universal appeal of

human rights and technological innovations can be perceived as global factors pushing the domestic situations of Poland and South Africa toward a breaking point.³¹

However, the most surprising aspect of the changes that took place in Poland and South Africa is that both came about through a process of negotiations among the representatives of the respective societies—without external mediation. While external factors influenced the political situation in both countries, neither the superpowers nor the rest of the international community played any role in the negotiations themselves. As agreements were concluded among internal political forces with broad support, the settlements enjoyed a wide measure of legitimacy that helped to buttress the stability of the post-transition governments. A factor that made these two unexpected negotiated revolutions possible was the previous ruling elites' loss of belief in the ideologies underpinning their rule. The collapse of credibility of both communism and apartheid as effective systems of government formed the backdrop to their astonishing surrender of power. It is worth underlining that, in both cases, the government's capacity to cling on to power had not been exhausted.

In addition to the global impact of the 1970s oil shocks, the international politics of the Cold War, and the structural commonalities of transition in Poland and South Africa, it is worth reflecting on the question of whether transnational linkages or exchanges emerged between the two countries. As part of the Soviet Bloc throughout the Cold War, Poland was expected to play its part in Soviet efforts to cultivate allies in the Third World, including Southern Africa.³² In practice, however, Poland's communists were not prominent supporters of the liberation struggles in Southern Africa in the 1970s and 1980s. Of the communist regimes in the Bloc, the most forthcoming in providing aid and training to movements aligned to Moscow was East Germany.³³

Beyond this rather tenuous link, however, little connected the Bloc and Southern Africa, either at the level of nation-states or non-state collective actors. The number of Poles from the West who had chosen to take up residence in South Africa before 1989 was tiny. After 1989, some Central and Eastern Europeans, including Poles, immigrated to South Africa dur-

³¹ See Padraic Kenney, 1989: *Democratic Revolutions at the Cold War's End: A Brief History in Documents* (Bedford/St Martin's: Boston, 2010), 4–7.

³² Open Society Archives, Records of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Research Institute, HU OSA 300-8-3-13788, *Poland's Presence in Black Africa*, 10–11.

³³ See, for example, Gregory Houston and Bernard Magubane, "The ANC's Armed Struggle in the 1970s," in *The Road to Democracy in South Africa, Vol. 2: 1970-1980*, ed. South African Democracy Education Trust (Cape Town: Zebra Press, 2006), 468–73.

ing the twilight years of minority rule. They predominantly kept a low political profile. One notable exception to this was Janusz Waluś, who joined a far-right group opposed to the transition. He achieved notoriety on April 10, 1993 as the assassin of the SACP leader, Chris Hani.³⁴ In his comments on the murder, Mandela highlighted the fact that he was a recent immigrant and that, by contrast, a white Afrikaner neighbor had come to Hani's aid after the shooting. Waluś was, controversially, refused amnesty for the murder by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission after his death sentence had been commuted to life imprisonment. More generally, the Polish community in South Africa was too small to play any collective role in the politics of either country. While direct contacts between the Polish and South African opposition were absent, a Polish academic at the University of the Witwatersrand, Robert Zuzowski, made a contribution to studies of the Polish transition with a 1992 book on Poland's Workers' Defense Committee.³⁵ Although Padraic Kenney has found that prisoners on Robben Island reflected upon the implications of the Solidarity movement in 1981, the constraints of their confinement would have limited the effect of any conclusions drawn.³⁶

Given this apparent lack of direct contact between groups of leading actors in the two countries, we conclude that the story of the Soviet Bloc's connections to South Africa played out at a level other than direct, reciprocal contact and exchange. In 1989, both right-wing supporters of the regime and left-wingers in the anti-apartheid movement tended to calculate that, in strategic terms, the collapse of communism in Central and Eastern Europe had tilted the balance of power in favor of the South African establishment. In fact, as it turned out, the opposite was true.

³⁴ It must be stated that over the years, Waluś has acquired a cult following among nationalist milieux and far right organizations in Poland. See, for example, Wojciech Karpieszuk and Piotr Wesołowicz, "Janusz Waluś 'ostatnim Żołnierzem Wyklętym'? Organizują manifestację w obronie mordercy," *Gazeta Wyborcza*, April 19, 2017, <http://warszawa.wyborcza.pl/warszawa/7,54420,21654662,janusz-walus-polski-bohater-z-rpa-rasista-ostatni-zolnierz.html>.

³⁵ Robert Zuzowski, *Political Dissent and Opposition in Poland: Workers' Defense Committee "KOR"* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1992).

³⁶ Padraic Kenney, "Electromagnetic Forces and Radio Waves, or, Does Transnational History Actually Happen?" in *Entangled Protest: Transnational Approaches to the History of Dissent in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union*, ed. Robert Brier (Osnabrück: Fibre Verlag, 2013), 43–52, at 50.

The “Leipzig Way” and the Diffusion of Revolutionary Mythology

Despite the absence of direct links between the two societies, there was recognition at a political level that what happened in Poland and elsewhere in the Soviet Bloc had implications for the situation in South Africa. Once the apartheid regime had conceded the release of political prisoners and the legalization of an opposition, a negotiation process was set in motion that presented the South African opposition with an initial problem. The ANC-led opposition had to move from being a liberation movement to a more conventional political force.³⁷ Moreover, the cessation of the armed struggle and the collapse of communism in Europe made obsolete any ideological sympathies of the South African opposition, particularly the South African Communist Party, for the Soviet Bloc communist establishments. Even those on the Left who had made the strategic calculation that the apartheid government could benefit from the collapse of European communism had little sympathy for the recently unemployed or deceased Soviet Bloc leaders.

Indeed, it was a member of the SACP, Jeremy Cronin, who took inspiration from his observation of the opposition movements in the Soviet Bloc to propose to the South African opposition a new model of political behavior. Cronin put forward a method that he called the “Leipzig Way,” in honor of the East German mass protests of October 1989, which began in Leipzig, and were widely understood to have forced Erich Honecker’s removal as Party leader. In an influential article prompted by an impasse in negotiations with the government in 1992, Cronin urged the entire South African opposition, and the ANC in particular, to adopt the tactic of rolling mass action as a means of pressuring the establishment to give way:

Comrades have been invoking the 1989 examples from Eastern Europe of massive and ongoing city centre demonstrations (in Leipzig, Prague, and elsewhere) which acted as the engine for the rapid demise of regimes. It is entirely valid to be invoking these examples: to underline that those who are presently condemning mass action in our country were the first to salute it when it occurred in Eastern Europe; and to illustrate the capacity of mass action to play a role in sweeping regimes out of power WHEN the balance of forces is favourable, and also IF incumbent regimes are sufficiently sensitive to questions of legitimacy and popular support (i.e. actually have a heart that can be changed).³⁸

³⁷ See Marina Ottaway, “Liberation Movements and Transition to Democracy: The Case of the A.N.C.,” *Journal of Modern African Studies* 29, no. 1 (1991): 61–82, at 63.

³⁸ See Jeremy Cronin, “The Boat, the Tap and the Leipzig Way: A Critique of Some Strategic Assumptions in our Ranks,” *The African Communist* 130 (3rd Quarter, 1992): 41–54, at 48.

The decision to resort to rolling mass action in order to outmaneuver the National Party's apartheid establishment modeled itself directly on the tactics of the East German opposition, and indirectly on the mobilization structure of the Polish strikes that had culminated in Solidarity's 1980 success at the Gdańsk Shipyard. The shift toward Soviet Bloc opposition tactics was an initiative of young radicals within the ANC and SACP ranks, who even became described by their colleagues as constituting a "Leipzig school" within the opposition. However, to paraphrase Cronin, South Africa's "balance of forces" had not yet driven that country's establishment to the same level of desperation as the Polish, Hungarian, or Czechoslovak authorities by the end of the 1980s. Simply put, whereas Gorbachev's policy toward the Soviet satellites, and the opportunity to draw conclusions from China's Tiananmen Square crackdown had made the Soviet Bloc establishments progressively less willing to use force, no such qualms hampered the South African National Party leadership or its proxies in neighboring territories.

This became painfully apparent in what would come to be known as the Bisho massacre. When negotiations broke down in 1992, the radicals in the ANC-led opposition alliance pushed hard for the opposition to take the Leipzig option. On September 7, a march on Bisho, the capital of the apartheid Bantustan homeland of Ciskei, was organized to topple the homeland's military leader, Oupa Gqozo, in a bid to destabilize the apartheid regime in Pretoria itself. An enthusiastic mass of 80,000 protesters, led by senior ANC officials, set out in a carnival atmosphere from the "white" South African side of the border with "black" Ciskei. However, the carnivalesque marchers were met with machine gun fire from Ciskeian soldiers. Twenty-eight protesters were killed, with more than two hundred wounded. Although the massacre discredited the regime, it also undermined the radicals within the opposition, whose actions were perceived as reckless. In the wake of the massacre, both regime and opposition realized that only talks could prevent an escalating spiral of violence.³⁹ Even more so, according to F. W. de Klerk, it was in fact the Bisho massacre that constituted a turning point in the transformation process, for it allowed the ANC to assess the risks of pursuing the Leipzig option of mass, public confrontation.⁴⁰

Although its fate was thus wildly different than that of the Soviet Bloc, the "Leipzig Way" and the consequences of the Bisho massacre set both establishment and opposition in South Africa on a path that would ultimately lead to peaceful transition through negotiation. In this sense, it is apparent that the "Leipzig Way" constituted an example of diffusion on

³⁹ See Allister Sparks, *Tomorrow is Another Country* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 147–51.

⁴⁰ de Klerk, *Last Trek*, 247.

multiple levels. South Africans not only copied Soviet Bloc tactics, but in so doing, they also put themselves in a position to make choices informed by past successes in the Bloc.⁴¹

The question that we face as analysts of the “Leipzig Way” and its consequences is one of how to classify this clear case of transnational influence. In his work on transnational diffusion within the Soviet Bloc, Padraic Kenney has shown that certain events tend to take on the form of “legends” through “stories of activism spread by foreign or underground media.” However, this form of diffusion implied a degree of direct involvement by the social movements in Central and Eastern Europe in transmitting such stories, a factor absent in the South African case.⁴² Looking at the structural commonalities and sequencing of revolutions in the post-Soviet space in the first decade of the 21st century, Mark R. Beissinger has applied the term “modular political phenomena” to stress the emulative character of social and political tactics leading to democratic revolution. In the case of modular revolution, however, the apparent precondition for transnational emulation is the existence of what Beissinger has called “common institutional characteristics, histories, cultural affinities, or modes of domination,”⁴³ which in the case of communism in Central and Eastern Europe and apartheid in South Africa are not at all evident. The above terms, although extremely useful, do not seem fully adequate to describe what occurred when the South African opposition adopted the “Leipzig Way.”

Nevertheless, it is important to underscore the fact that the South African communists paid closer attention to the events of 1989 in the Soviet Bloc—which had been transmitted to South Africa through media coverage—than did ANC or other opposition activists.⁴⁴ The embrace of Euro-

⁴¹ On diffusion, see, for example: Barbara Wejnert, “Diffusion, Development, and Democracy, 1800–1999,” *American Sociological Review* 70, no. 1 (February 2005): 53–81; Sean Chabot and Jan Willem Duyvendak, “Globalization and Transnational Diffusion between Social Movements: Reconceptualizing the Dissemination of the Gandhian Repertoire and the ‘Coming Out’ Routine,” *Theory and Society* 1, no. 6 (December 2002): 697–740.

⁴² Compare with Padraic Kenney, “Opposition Networks and Transnational Diffusion in the Revolutions of 1989,” in *Transnational Moments of Change: Europe 1945, 1968, 1989*, ed. Gerd-Rainer Horn and Padraic Kenney (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2004), 207–25, at 210.

⁴³ Mark R. Beissinger, “Structure and Example in Modular Political Phenomena: The Diffusion of Bulldozer/Rose/Orange/Tulip Revolutions,” *Perspectives on Politics* 5, no. 2 (June 2007): 259–76, at 263.

⁴⁴ This point was in fact made by the editors of the *African Communist*, the journal of the SACP, when discussing the implications of the “Leipzig Way.” See “Editorial Notes,” *The African Communist* 130 (3rd Quarter, 1992).

pean anti-communist oppositionary tactics further underlines that, in fact, the SACP was anything but a conventional communist party. As R. W. Johnson had already written in 1977, the government, in imagining that its liberal critics were covert communists, had gotten matters back to front.⁴⁵

Moreover, the fact that the mythology of *anti-communist* revolutions in the Soviet Bloc inspired the young *communist* radicals within the South African opposition reveals a unique psychology crucial to this form of diffusion. These radicals, influenced by the township revolts and mass mobilization prior to 1989, had sought revolution *pur sang*. 1989 changed their understanding of revolutionary action: the images and accounts of mass demonstrations in the streets of Soviet Bloc cities in 1989 provided them with an example of tactics to follow, despite their deep ideological differences with the Central and Eastern European protesters who, after all, had brought about the disestablishment of the very communist ideology for which the South Africans in question were agitating.

The invocation of the “Leipzig Way” therefore represents what psychologists describe as a “copycat effect.”⁴⁶ It was the result of diffusion via mediatization and observation from another continent of the events of 1989, followed by a unilateral imitation in keeping with the “will to create a revolution.” A further justification we use in characterizing the “Leipzig Way” as a copycat phenomenon was the miscalculation made by the South African opposition regarding possible violent escalation. In other words, the activists emulated Soviet Bloc tactics without fully grasping the implications of the differences in ideology and political dynamics between the Bloc and Southern Africa.⁴⁷

However, despite the initial disparity regarding the level of violence that existed between the transitions in Poland and South Africa, it is nevertheless hard not to notice the commonalities between the ultimately successful ends of both transitions. Without the inspiring effect that the events of 1989 had on the South African situation, the “Leipzig Way” as such would not have been on the table for Cronin and his colleagues, and the South

⁴⁵ R. W. Johnson, *How Long Will South Africa Survive?* (London: Macmillan, 1977), 21.

⁴⁶ Our source for the term is Loren Coleman, *The Copycat Effect: How the Media and Popular Culture Trigger the Mayhem in Tomorrow's Headlines* (New York: Pocket Books, 2004).

⁴⁷ That said, one of our goals in invoking this term is to disentangle the “copycat” terminology from the extremely negative connotations it has assumed in the literature of criminology and psychology, evident for example in Phillip Chong Ho Shon and Michael A. Roberts, “An Archival Exploration of Homicide—Suicide and Mass Murder in the Context of 19th-Century American Parricides,” *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology* 54, no. 1 (2010): 43–60.

African situation might easily have developed differently. For in the end, just as in Poland, the leaders of the apartheid regime and the South African opposition resorted to a negotiated process of regime change.

We thus return to the structural commonalities between the two cases discussed in this chapter. While the Polish opposition had drawn lessons from martial law, the South African opposition came to learn similar lessons from the Bisho massacre. Recognition in both countries of these commonalities in the course of the 1990s led to a series of conferences, organized by the Project on Justice in Times of Transition, in which protagonists of the events of 1989 in Central and Eastern Europe and representatives of the South African opposition took part. These conferences afforded activists from both continents the opportunity to exchange views on a more direct, personal level.⁴⁸ By this time, however, the situation in both Poland and South Africa had changed. The freedom that resulted from the transitions from communism and apartheid facilitated direct contacts between representatives and milieux of former dissidents and opposition activists that had not existed prior to regime change. As such, one must regard these exchanges as part of another story, that of post-communist and post-apartheid societies grappling with the challenges of dealing with their respective pasts.

Conclusion

We began this chapter by affirming that the events of 1989 were of truly global significance, and that their political implications were not confined to the societies directly caught up in the events of that year. However, little research has been devoted to the question of whether this global aspect of 1989 also entailed more implicit forms of connection between countries that did not lie in proximity to each other. One of the purposes of this comparative and connective study of Poland and South Africa has been to bring out this dimension, while also underlining the general importance of including external factors in accounts of domestic politics. Even considering the significant differences between the two cases, this chapter has demonstrated a series of structural commonalities that, in the end, facilitated strikingly similar developments in both countries in the processes of the demise of communism and apartheid.

What makes the cases of Poland and South Africa particularly important to examine together is their demonstration that far-reaching change is possible, even when the ruling capacity of an existing regime appears to

⁴⁸ See *The Project on Justice in Times of Transition*, accessed September 27, 2010, <http://www.pjtt.org>.

remain fully intact. While communist rule came to Poland as a consequence of war, change proved possible without a military reversal of the Second World War. Moreover, the Soviet Union relinquished its “spoils of war,” the inclusion of Central and Eastern Europe into its sphere of influence, without resorting to military action to protect its interests in the region as it had previously. Above all, Poland’s communist leaders had used the army to halt the advance of Solidarity in 1981, but in 1989, those very same leaders refused to do so again, instead overseeing and joining in the peaceful dismantling of the communist regime. Similarly, the military apparatus of white minority rule remained fully operational in South Africa when Mandela took his oath of office in 1994. Indeed, one of the Defense Force’s generals expressed his frustration that President de Klerk had failed to use his military competencies to try to bring about a different outcome.⁴⁹ In both cases, pressure from below helped to determine what happened in ways that few social scientists or historians would have dared to predict.

Finally, we can state with confidence that, despite the significant geographical distance between the two countries, elements of the struggle in Poland and the Soviet Bloc more generally permeated the thinking of the South African opposition. Although there was little direct contact at either state or non-state level, mediatization of the events in Poland and other Soviet Bloc countries caught the attention of opposition activists in South Africa. The South African perception of what had happened in the Bloc became an inspiration, and they copied and applied the tactics of the anti-communist opposition, as they understood them, in their own struggle. The fact that the South African opposition resorted to a tactic termed the “Leipzig Way” clearly demonstrates this connection. It is possible to draw enormously significant conclusions by pulling back from the European context of the most celebrated events of 1989 and looking at the impact that these developments had locally in other regions of the world, as has been done in this chapter with the cases of Poland and South Africa. Such a comparative and connective study provides a means of enhancing our understanding of the global dimension of 1989 where regional analysis seems to fall short, thereby ensuring that the worldwide impact of that year’s extraordinary events receives the recognition it deserves.

⁴⁹ Georg Meiring, quoted in Herman Giliomee, *The Afrikaners: Biography of a People* (Cape Town: Tafelberg, 2003), 641.

CHAPTER 2

Islam as Ideology and Tactic: Soviet Central Asia and Afghanistan

Věra Exnerová

When the Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev announced his intention to withdraw the Red Army from Afghanistan in 1988, and Soviet soldiers began to leave the country one year later, millions of Afghans celebrated what they saw as their own victory of Islam over the alien ideology of communism. At about the same time, another defeat of Soviet atheist ideology, one almost unnoticed by world media, was already underway across the Amu Darya river in Central Asia. After seven decades of harsh anti-religious campaigns and persecution, people began to restore old mosques, construct new ones, and enroll in thousands of religious courses. The sense of Islam's triumph over communism, and religion over atheism, was ubiquitous in these regions.

On the other side of the globe, the atmosphere of victory prompted Western commentators to depict the future on the basis of an understanding that the age of great ideological battles was over. Among the most prominent was Francis Fukuyama's thesis announcing the end of history.¹ His argument was based on reading past events in terms of ideological struggle, with ideologies conceptualized as competitors whose relevance was measured by their ability to accommodate contradictions within a society. On the one hand, such a conceptual framework led Fukuyama to identify religion, and particularly Islam, as a potential ideological competitor to liberalism (and communism previously). On the other hand, it also allowed him to dismiss the potential of religion, on the assumption that the motivation behind the use of religion in politics stemmed from a spiritual emptiness at the core of liberalism (and in the case of communism, presumably from its atheist agenda)—something he doubted could be remedied through politics. Today, thirty years later, there has been no more vital political issue than the role of Islam in politics. An increasing number of decision-makers and scholars thus find themselves looking for answers to a question that was seemingly conclusively solved by 1989 itself.

¹ Francis Fukuyama, "The End of History?" *The National Interest* 16 (Summer 1989): 3–18.

This chapter aims to revisit the events leading up to 1989 from the perspective of Islam's role in politics. Specifically, it aims to explore the underlying assumption of Fukuyama's thesis and other accounts that conceptualize Cold War politics mainly in terms of ideological struggle. Seen through such a lens, opposition in the name of Islam seemingly formed in reaction to the ruling ideology and its effects—whether the spiritual emptiness it created, or the aggressive secularization policies it legitimated. In actuality, however, even a cursory glance at the events leading up to 1989 suggests otherwise. In Soviet Central Asia, where the communist regime carried out harsh anti-religious campaigns throughout its seven decades of existence, little political opposition formed under the banner of Islam, especially after the 1930s. Meanwhile, across the Amu Darya river in Afghanistan, where neither the indigenous communists nor their Soviet advisers attempted to implement visibly forceful “secularization” policies, Islam served as the unifying factor for a nationwide opposition.

The following text analyzes these particular power dynamics in two case studies of different contexts. First, the chapter will explore the strategies of various actors who legitimized their actions by appealing to Islam, in the context of the communist regime's aggressive secularization policies in Soviet Central Asia prior to 1989. The analysis will reveal that appeals to Islam were indeed used to oppose the ruling order. However, this order was not synonymous with the Soviet state. Rather, it was the Muslim society in general which, in this context, served as the ideal in whose name various actors asserted themselves against their opponents. Second, the essay will explore the circumstances that led to the emergence of Islamist-inspired groups that would later play a major role in the opposition to the Soviets in Afghanistan. Here, too, appeals to Islam were used to oppose those in power, though in this case, it was mainly in the name of the ideal of an Islamic state. Overall, it will become apparent that, while in both Central Asia and Afghanistan power dynamics revolved around appeals to Islam, this was not in reaction to communist ideology. On the contrary, it was Muslim society, or the Islamic state, that served as ideal, allowing various actors to challenge perceived corrupters in Islamic terms, within their particular contexts.

Such a comparative perspective will thus challenge the approach typically used to analyze Cold War politics, which equates the ruling order with the state and consequently seeks to conceptualize opposition as a reaction to official state ideology and its effects. Instead, this chapter will demonstrate that opposition forms within an ideology, among those whose existence depends on the ruling order it produces, but who fail to find self-assertion in their particular contexts.

The findings presented in this chapter are based on ethnographic research carried out by the author in Afghanistan and Central Asia in 2007–

2011, complemented by information from Soviet archival documents and other published sources.² This on-the-ground approach highlights both the impact of the 1989 events on Central Asia and their enduring influence across the region. The fall of communism, first in Afghanistan and then in the Soviet republics, was followed by the rise of a new transnational ideology, Islamism. As this chapter shows, however, Islamism arose out of internal power struggles within Muslim societies, rather than in opposition to communist rule. Consequently, these power struggles continued after the Soviet collapse, prolonging instability across the region. This analysis situates the fall of communism in Central Asia within a broader narrative of religious contestation, spanning the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s. The rise of Central Asian Islamism, it argues, was a key feature of the “long 1989.”

Central Asia

During the Cold War, the role of Islam in Central Asia and other Muslim societies in the Soviet Union was carefully followed and analyzed, not only by Soviet scholars and ideologues, but also in the West. The unifying point of interest was the potential of Islam to mobilize opposition against communist rule. From an ideological perspective, the communists’ objective was not to eliminate Islam or religion in general from society. Rather, religion was supposed to lose its power over the population gradually, through the social progress achieved by means of economic modernization and education. Nevertheless, the Soviet leaders’ need for legitimation in a classless society mandated that they fight rival power structures within that society. As such, despite initially ambivalent policies toward various local power holders, by 1928 Islam had formally disappeared from public life within the USSR.³ Muslim social institutions were proclaimed to be eradicated, while the buildings of former mosques and *madrasas* were damaged or else turned into storage facilities and schools—where the non-existence of God was to be taught from then on. In the following years, the Soviet regime also attempted to eliminate perceived guardians of the existing order, who were seen as potential instigators of opposition to communism. Thousands of

² The following text, however, in no way aspires to provide an exhaustive narrative account of the periods under discussion. Rather, the goal here is to present a cohesive, simplified synthesis of the complex power dynamics in both Central Asia and Afghanistan.

³ For more information on Soviet anti-religious policies in Central Asia during this period, see, for instance, Shoshana Keller, *To Moscow, Not Mecca: The Soviet Campaign Against Islam in Central Asia, 1917–1941* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2001).

educated people, mainly from among the religious authorities, were killed, sent to labor camps, or fled. Some managed to stay by hiding in less populated areas, or by remaining at home under involuntary confinement, but the communist regime continued to persecute these figures whenever the opportunity allowed until the very last years of Soviet rule.⁴

Contrary to Soviet claims, however, many religious authorities did not actively seek to oppose the communist regime or challenge its ideology.⁵ Most of those who survived the purges decided to flee to Afghanistan and Saudi Arabia, or—particularly at the village level—blended in with the local population as ordinary peasants. Their strategy was to wait, and even those who escaped to Afghanistan did not integrate into Afghan society, in the belief that Soviet attacks were only temporary, and they would be able to return to their homeland within a few years. This was partly a legacy of Tsarist rule, when local religious authorities were allowed to continue to fulfill their functions in society, in spite of the political context created by the Russians.⁶ In this sense, the Bolshevik takeover was perceived as yet another form of Russian domination.

More importantly, however, religious figures did not depend on the new ruling order for their legitimacy. Rather, their authority lay in guaranteeing the order of Islam, and in this sense they depended on the community of Muslims, not on an external political regime or on any given territory for their personal self-assertion. Consequently, many of those who stayed and survived the purges chose the only possible strategy of maintaining their

⁴ This chapter draws extensively on interviews with residents of the geographical areas under discussion, granted to the author on the condition that total anonymity be maintained. For this reason, I cite the interviews as a collective set identified by geographical location and month during which the relevant interviews took place. The author conducted all interviews personally. Interviews, Farghona Valley, Uzbekistan, September 2007, May, June 2008; Interviews, Dushanbe, Tajikistan, October 2008; Interviews, Kolkhozobod, Tajikistan, October 2008.

⁵ During the initial period of the communist regime in the region, which was characterized by changing policies and general chaos, many religious authorities criticized some of the Soviet norms as incompatible with *shari'a* law, especially with regard to the emancipation of women, industrialization of agriculture, and so on. Some local religious figures even joined groups that sought to fight against the Soviets. Nevertheless, they did not oppose communist ideology per se, nor did they seek to organize political opposition against Soviet rule. They primarily sought to maintain their own position within the society as guardians of the ideal of Islam.

⁶ On this period see, for instance, Petr P. Litvinov, *Gosudarstvo i islam v russkom Turkestane (1865–1917) (po arkhivnym materialam)* (Yelets: EGPI, 1998); Robert D. Crews, *For Prophet and Tsar: Islam and Empire in Russia and Central Asia* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006).

role in society and opposing the new regime: seeking a separation from Soviet reality.⁷

Meanwhile, the initial ambiguity of Soviet policies in the region was used by previous opponents of traditionalist religious authorities to continue their self-assertion strategies. At the end of the nineteenth century, a group of emerging businessmen, educated people, and reformist religious figures (calling themselves *jadids*, after *jadid usul*, the new method they promoted in education) began to oppose some of the local religious authorities, under the pretext that these authorities were impeding the modernization of Muslim society. Ideologically, the *jadids* were inspired by political groupings legitimizing their actions through appeals to the idea of modernization within the Russian Empire, as well as in other Muslim countries.⁸ However, their actions were motivated primarily by the quest for meaningful self-assertion in their home context, and therefore the ruling order that they aimed to modernize was not the Tsarist administration, but Islam. Consequently, they could only legitimize their actions on behalf of Muslim society in Islamic terms, by challenging the authority of perceived corrupters of the ideal of the ruling order: traditionalist religious leaders. This was confirmed after the establishment of communist rule in the region, when many *jadids* joined the ranks of the Communist Party and took an active role in the process of Soviet nation-building. Specifically, they used the Soviet apparatus to pursue their own ideological goals by taking control over matters traditionally guarded by other religious authorities. For example, they stood behind the establishment of the so-called *Makhama-i-Shari'a*, spiritual “boards”—roughly corresponding to customary courts—intended to resolve questions of heritage, marriage, divorce, education, and the appointment of religious figures, but also to combat improper interpretations of Islam.⁹ These boards were later abolished, and most *jadids* were persecuted by the Soviet regime, but mainly as part of the internal purges in the Communist Party in the second half of the 1930s.

⁷ Interviews, Farghona Valley, September 2007, May 2008; Interviews, Kolkhozobod, October 2008; Interviews, Kunduz, Afghanistan, July, October, November 2008; Interviews, Mazar-e-Sharif, Afghanistan, July, October, November 2008; Interviews, Samangan, Afghanistan, July, October, November 2008.

⁸ On this movement, see, for example, Adeeb Khalid, *The Politics of Muslim Cultural Reform: Jadidism in Central Asia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998); Jeff Eden, Paolo Sartori, and Devin DeWeese, eds., *Beyond Modernism: Rethinking Islam in Russia, Central Asia and Western China (19th–20th Centuries)*, special issue, *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 59 (2016): 1–332.

⁹ A. N. Satvaldiyev, “Islam v zhizni Uzbekov Ferganskoi doliny 1980–1990 gg.” (PhD diss., Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology, Russian Academy of Sciences, 1995), 49–50.

Moreover, the Soviet regime itself used the Islamic factor for its own ideological goals. Official authorities were well aware that despite intensive modernization policies aimed at creating model Soviet citizens with an atheist and materialist worldview, in many regions people continued to use the principles of Islam to guide their lives. As such, where necessary, they relied on the authority of the guarantors of this ruling order to achieve their own ideological aims. In the first decades of Soviet rule, when there were no other educated people at the local level, *mullas* were in some cases appointed as teachers in Soviet schools. Soviet authorities also sometimes sought to nominate *mullas*, or other spiritual leaders with authority among the local population, to important functions in the kolkhoz administration in order to prevent misappropriation of kolkhoz property or harvests. This led to situations where an illiterate person (which, in Soviet terms, meant someone not able to read and write in Cyrillic) was appointed to be a kolkhoz accountant, or where three generations of men from one religious family served as the successive heads of a local kolkhoz.¹⁰ Formally, however, none of these cases contradicted Soviet atheist policies, as local religious authorities were appointed to these functions in their capacity as Soviet citizens.

The situation also changed with World War II, when communist leaders found it necessary to make appeals to Islam in order to mobilize the population in Muslim areas for the common cause of homeland defense. For this purpose, however, they needed to establish some sort of Muslim representation. Consequently, after negotiations with several local religious leaders, the Spiritual Board for Muslims in Central Asia and Kazakhstan was established in 1943. If originally its aim was to serve domestic needs during the war, it gradually evolved into a complex institution catering to Soviet ideological goals. After the end of World War II, these were predominantly determined by the context of the Cold War, when the existence of an official Muslim representative body was intended to secure support from friendly Muslim countries in the common fight against the imperialist bloc. The Spiritual Board both represented the Soviet Union abroad and demonstrated religious freedom in front of foreign delegations that visited Soviet Central Asia.¹¹ In turn, these policies influenced the power dynamics among religious authorities in the region.

¹⁰ Interestingly, people known to have authority among the population for their religious knowledge or ancestry were nominated to these functions mainly after World War II, specifically in the 1950s and 1960s. Interviews, Farghona Valley, September 2007, May 2008.

¹¹ Any contact with foreign actors, both in Central Asia and abroad—for instance, on pilgrimage to Mecca, where the Soviet regime sent about twenty representatives annually, or by students belonging to official religious institutions, who were

Originally, the Spiritual Board was set up by Ishan Babakhan, a member of a prominent local religious family who did not take a stance toward the religious authorities operating underground.¹² However, his son Ziyautdin Babakhan, who took over the position of *mufti* from his father, joined with other, now official religious figures to promote a new approach to Islam—in opposition to the tolerant Hanafi school of Islam, which had ruled the region for centuries. They argued that, under the leadership of local religious authorities, the Muslim community had fallen into superstitious and heretical ways, and strayed from the fundamentals of Islam; the Spiritual Board, they claimed, was thus the only guarantor of authentic Islam in the region. Furthermore, in order to legitimize their role within the Soviet apparatus, they argued that the USSR's Muslim community had not only retained its Islamic distinctiveness, but had also significantly contributed to the progress of Soviet ideology itself. They even used examples from Islamic texts to argue that the “true” Islam espoused many of the social and economic values of communism.¹³ In a country ruled by an aggressively atheist regime, it was thus possible to hear the *imam* of a mosque in Uzbekistan warn his listeners that “it is necessary to read it [the Qur'an] properly and interpret it correctly. Incorrect interpretation is a great sin against Allah. Islam commands us to study the Qur'an deeply and cor-

allowed to study in Egypt, Syria, and other friendly countries—was subject to intensive preparation and control by Soviet authorities, as is evident from the Soviet archives. See, for instance, “Spravka k voprosu o ispol'zovanii vneshnei deiatel'nosti religioznykh organizatsyi SSSR v interesakh sovetskogo gosudarstva,” September 22, 1960, Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Archiv Noveishei Istorii (Russian State Archive for Contemporary History, RGANI), fond 5, opis 33, delo 162, 61; “Informatsiia o poezdke musul'man-palomnikov iz Sovetskogo soiuza v Mekku v 1955 g.,” RGANI, fond 5, opis 30, delo 93, 32; “Rekomendatsii musul'manam-palomnikom napravliaiushchimsia v Mekku, 1960 god,” RGANI, fond 5, opis 33, delo 162, str. 132–35. On the Spiritual Board of Central Asia and Kazakhstan, see Mark Saroyan, *Minorities, Mullahs, and Modernity: Reshaping Community in the Former Soviet Union*, ed. Edward W. Walker (Berkeley: University of California, 1997); Mehrdad Haghayeghi, *Islam and Politics in Central Asia* (London: Macmillan Press, 1995).

¹² He was from the family of Sayram *khojas*. His family, which presided over the Spiritual Administration until 1989, also belonged to the Naqshbandi *shaykhs*. See Ashirbek Muminov, “Traditional and Modern Religious-Theological Schools in Central Asia,” CA&CC Press, accessed November 18, 2010, <http://www.ca-c.org/dataeng/09.muminov.shtml>.

¹³ Saroyan, *Minorities, Mullahs, and Modernity*, 48–49. See also Bakhtyar Babadzhanov, *O fetyakh SADUM protiv neislamskikh obychev, Islam na postsovetском prostranstve: vzgljad iznutri*, ed. Martha Brill Olcott and Aleksei Malashenko (Moscow: Carnegie Center, 2001), 170–84.

rectly, rejecting any deviations from the Qur'an. Prophet Muhammad is the messenger of God on Earth, and every Muslim must obey his teachings."¹⁴

The impact of such claims disseminated through the system of official mosques was minimal. For one thing, the numbers of official clergy were kept low.¹⁵ Moreover, under Soviet rule only the elderly were allowed to attend mosques, and they could hardly be expected to promote these ideas in their communities, where they themselves served as guardians of the Islamic tradition—understood in its local form as being opposed to the imported ruling order represented by the Russians.¹⁶ Nevertheless, the potential of these ideas was not measured by its relevance among the population, something that was impossible in the context of an aggressively atheist regime. Rather, these ideas (usually associated with the so-called ideology of Islamism, which is used to oppose the state on the pretext that the state does not ensure the *shari'a* as law) here served to legitimize the official religious establishment vis-à-vis the perceived guarantors of Islam, namely the other local religious authorities. The relevance of the official religious establishment's claims thus directly depended on the existence of a group of actors that the Soviet regime continuously tried to eliminate.

This power dynamic also had repercussions both for the underground network of religious education and for power relations within communities and families, which played out against the backdrop of Soviet modernization policies. On one hand, the communist regime produced significant changes in the local society, achieving near-universal literacy, improved health care, and significant demographic growth. On the other hand, the increasing social and economic crisis caused by the inability of Soviet mod-

¹⁴ T. Abbasov, "Memo to A. A. Nurullaiev," Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii (State Archive of the Russian Federation, GARF), fond 6991, opis 3, delo 1707, l.1.

¹⁵ In 1985, there were 266 registered "servants of the cult" in Soviet Uzbekistan. "Statisticheskiye otchoty po detal'nosti religioznykh organizatsii v oblastiach Uzbekistana," GARF, fond 6991, opis 3, delo 3130.

¹⁶ From the Soviet perspective, attendance by the elderly at mosques did not threaten communist objectives (though, if people of productive age appeared in mosques, they were punished by local authorities). From the local perspective, through regular attendance in mosques the old generation represented not only themselves, but also their family members and relatives (i.e. the whole family or patrimony). Consequently, it was not rare for people working for the local administration not only to start attending mosques after their retirement, but sometimes even to perform religious rites for the needs of their home community. Interviews, Farghona Valley, September 2007, May 2008, June 2008. See also Věra Exnerová, "Caught Between the Muslim Community and the State: The Role of the Local Uzbek Authorities in Ferghana Valley, 1950s-1980s," *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 26, no. 1 (April 2006): 101–12.

ernization policies to secure income contributed to maintaining the ruling order of Islam at the local level. According to some sources, at the end of the 1980s eighty-five percent of the adult population in the region was engaged in private small-scale production, and was therefore economically independent of the communist state, despite Soviet claims of advanced socialism.¹⁷ Furthermore, the Soviet regime did not manage to stimulate enough territorial and social mobility to produce changes in authority patterns. According to statistics from 1989, in Farghona Valley, one of the traditional regional centers of Central Asia, only 14.3 percent of the population lived in a place where they had not been born.¹⁸ The average age of the inhabitants of Andijan oblast was twenty-four; in rural areas, twenty-three. Although most of the population lived in villages (in Andijan oblast, sixty-eight percent), the community and family structures remained the same in towns as in rural areas. Increasing numbers of children and young people were thus living under the constant supervision of older generations (some of them born before 1917), whose behavior patterns, as well as social norms, they had to follow.

The ambivalent effect of Soviet policies influenced the means of self-assertion available to youth in these contexts, where elders often served as guarantors of the Islamic ruling order in families and communities, and where religious knowledge was transmitted by diverse religious authorities operating illegally at the local level. However, here the youth largely did not seek to oppose the Soviet regime for its failure to provide a means for their self-assertion. On the contrary, since they were members of local Muslim society, their only meaningful self-assertion outside of the existing power relations had to be framed in Islamic terms. Initially, this power dynamic reached the underground circles of religious authorities; since the 1920s, these had gradually evolved into a network where one could spend decades studying under the guidance of different teachers while being a member of Soviet society by day.¹⁹ Thanks to qualitative changes brought about by the communist regime, which allowed people to analyze information and study directly from books rather than through a mediator, young people increas-

¹⁷ N. M. Aliakberova, *Razmeshchenie naseleniia Ferganskoi doliny (demograficheskii aspekt)* (Tashkent: Fan, 1990), 6; S. P. Poliakov, "Traditsionalizm v sovremennom sredneaziatskom obshchestve," in *Musulmanskaia Sredniaia Aziia: Traditsionalizm i XX vek*, ed. D. Yu. Arapov (Moscow: RAN, 2004), 31–32.

¹⁸ *Results of the 1989 U.S.S.R. Population Census* (Minneapolis, MN: East View Publications, 1996).

¹⁹ In Marghelan, for instance, Abdul Kunduz Khoja (d. 1960) established a guild where students officially worked as guards while in practice dedicating their time to religious studies. People studied with different teachers and learned from various sources, according to their particular needs and interests. Interviews, Farghona Valley, May 2008.

ingly became teachers themselves.²⁰ Such opportunities were also potentially subversive, however, as some of the students began to advocate the ideas of the Muslim Brotherhood and other reformist thinkers, both local and foreign, to oppose the authority of scholars in order to gain prominence as religious authorities in their own right and circumvent the complex chain of authority.²¹ The ideological conflict among religious authorities soon reached a broader audience, when both sides began to record their sermons and distribute them among the people. This produced a polarization in some communities where young people, primarily men, began to challenge the authority of local *mullas* and elders as the guarantors of the ruling order—Islam.²² This seemingly ideological dispute then translated into grave social conflict, which materialized outside of the Soviet political system, since the ruling order that guided both sides' conduct—and on which they depended for their self-assertion—was not the Soviet state, but Islam.²³

Among the actors who claimed to oppose the Soviet regime militarily or politically were individuals who, in the initial years of communist rule in Central Asia, tried to build on local village defense efforts against raids by Soviet soldiers in the Farghona Valley and other regions of Turkestan. These ad hoc bands were made up mostly of male youths using the opportunity to gain status, organized by self-proclaimed leaders who lacked the authority to stand up against the Russians in the name of Islam. Consequently, they legitimized their actions primarily by opposing other self-proclaimed leaders of the resistance. For instance, the opposition was temporarily led by Enver

²⁰ Interview, Farghona Valley, September 2007.

²¹ For a concise overview of the origins of reformist thinking within Islam in Central Asia, see the introduction to Bakhtyar M. Babadzhanov, Ashirbek K. Muminov and Anke von Kügelgen, eds., *Disputes on Muslim Authority in Central Asia in the 20th Century* (Almaty: Daik Press, 2007). The ideas of foreign “Islamist” thinkers reached the underground network from the library of the Spiritual Board, or from students from friendly Muslim countries who brought the materials to Tashkent. Interviews, Farghona Valley, May 2008; Interviews, Kabul, November 2008.

²² In the increasingly liberal atmosphere of the late 1980s and early 1990s, these questions were discussed in mosques and in public in the Farghona Valley, but it was only in 1991–1992 that they were translated into political action, already against their own—the Muslim government of Uzbekistan. Interviews, Farghona Valley, September 2007, May 2008, June 2008.

²³ See, for instance, Stéphane A. Dudoignon and Christian Noack, eds., *Allah's Kolkhozes: Migration, De-Stalinisation, Privatisation, and the New Muslim Congregations in the Soviet Realm (1950s–2000s)* (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 2014); Věra Exnerová, “Radical Islam from Below: The Mujaddidiya and Hizb-ut-Tahrir in Ferghana Valley,” in *Islam, Society, and Politics in Central Asia*, ed. Pauline Jones (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2017), 55–78.

Pasha, a Turkish general originally invited by the Soviets to normalize the situation in the region, who then switched sides with ambitions of establishing one empire under the ideologies of Pan-Islamism and Pan-Turkism. Similarly, his main opponent, Ibrahim Beg, loyal to the Emir of Bukhara, legitimized his leadership of the opposition movement by promising to restore local order, which he claimed was endangered by reformists advocating foreign concepts of Pan-Islamism and modernization.²⁴ The apparent ideological divide that prevented the opposition from uniting—and led to the defeat of most of these bands in 1922, when Enver Pasha was killed (although Ibrahim Beg managed to organize attacks in Tajikistan until the beginning of the 1930s)²⁵—was thus mainly understood as a manifestation of local power dynamics against the backdrop of the new context.

We can conclude that, throughout the existence of the Soviet regime, Islam was not typically used to oppose communist ideology or its leaders, because those who depended on the ruling order it produced did not seek to assert themselves by challenging the legitimacy of the communist regime. Instead, their self-affirmation strategies stemmed from conceptualizing themselves as members of Muslim society. Consequently, although both the atheist and the modernization policies of the Soviet regime produced circumstances in which particular groups of actors looked for new means of self-assertion in opposition to the ruling Islamic order, this was mainly possible within Islamic discourse itself. The relevance of particular ideological claims did not depend on their support among the population, nor on political context. Rather, the relevance of ideas used by particular

²⁴ Soviet leaders skillfully used these divisions in their own efforts to gain control over the region. On these revolts, see Marie Broxup, "The Basmachi," *Central Asian Survey* 2, no. 1 (1983): 57–81; and—from the post-Soviet period—Marco Buttino, "Ethnicité et politique dans la guerre civile: à propos du 'basmachestvo' au Fergana," *Cahiers du monde russe et soviétique* 38, no. 1–2 (1997): 195–222. Overall, it has proven difficult to assess the movement because most accounts are based on Soviet sources, which were published within the framework of ideological attempts to portray the revolts as mere banditry. This has affected conceptualizations of the movement in oral history as well. While to this day interviewees in Central Asia tend to detach themselves from the conflict between the *qurboshi* (as they were called locally) and the Soviets, in northeastern Afghanistan the *qurboshi* are more often remembered as heroes waging jihad against the Russians. Interviews, Kolkhozobod, October 2008; Interviews, Farghona Valley, September 2007; Interviews, Kunduz Province, Afghanistan, July 2008.

²⁵ After losing the support of the Afghan king, he was betrayed and killed in one of his raids across the Amu Darya. Interviews, Kunduz Province, July 2008. See William Ritter, "The Final Phase in the Liquidation of Anti-Soviet Resistance in Tadzhikistan: Ibrahim Bek and the Basmachi, 1924–31," *Soviet Studies* 37, no. 4 (October 1985): 484–93.

actors was determined by their potential to challenge the way in which their opponents derived their role as guarantors in the existing context. The only way that communist rule was thus opposed was by living Islam itself, when local norms transmitted across generations and over centuries were perceived as superior to the ideas that Russian *muzhiks* used to justify their colonization of Central Asia's Muslim society.²⁶

In this sense, what people in Central Asia celebrated in 1989 was the victory of their traditional ruling order over the innovations introduced by the Russians. A struggle for power had been taking place within this tradition, against the backdrop of Soviet policies aimed at achieving their own political objective—establishing the order of communism. The power dynamics within Central Asian society were thus determined not only by the communist ideology or by the borders of the Soviet state—in fact, the Soviet regime was only one of the actors in the local power dynamics—but by the ideal of a Muslim society in whose name individual actors legitimized their actions.

Afghanistan

Unlike Central Asia, where the role of Islam in politics was analyzed from the perspective of potential internal opposition to the communist regime—both by Soviet ideologues and Western political analysts—Afghanistan was a territory where the Cold War was actually taking place internally. Consequently, in the West the Afghan opposition was pictured primarily as a national resistance against the Soviet invasion.²⁷ The Soviet leaders in turn legitimized the invasion of Afghanistan as an act of assistance to a friendly communist country threatened by the imperialist interests of the West. Here, despite the communist regime's lack of visibly forceful secularization goals, it was Islam that served as the organizing principle for the opposition against the communist government. This opposition did not form in reaction to communist ideology; rather, the power dynamics were determined by the external context. Indeed, ever since the country was dragged into the Great Game between the British and Tsarist empires, Afghan rulers legitimized their leadership by acting as guarantors of the Islamic order against potential aggression from other countries.²⁸ Consequently, developments both before and during the communist regime were, to a large extent, de-

²⁶ Courtesy of the records of J. and P. Exner (the author's parents) from travels in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan in August 1983 and 1984.

²⁷ From this perspective, those conceptualized as Islamists today were called "freedom fighters" in Western discourse.

²⁸ On political legitimization, see Thomas Barfield, "Problems in Establishing Legitimacy in Afghanistan," *Iranian Studies* 37, no. 2 (June 2004): 263–93.

terminated by an ideological struggle over the concept of the ideal state, framed in Islamic terms.

The ideas that allowed the opposition to the communists in Afghanistan to gain political strength were the same as those used in Soviet Central Asia by both the official Muslim representatives and the young religious students in the underground education network to oppose their perceived common rivals, the traditionalist religious authorities. In fact, despite the seemingly opposite political context, the teachings of the Muslim Brotherhood reached Afghan Islamic discourse through similar channels. They were brought to Afghanistan by professors from Kabul University after their visits to Egypt, where they found these teachings to be relevant ways of challenging the legitimacy of other religious authorities as guarantors of Islam. If these ideas would be used later to legitimize the opposition of youth in Central Asian communities against their elders, in the Afghan context the ideas of Islamism found primary resonance among students at Kabul University and other government schools.²⁹

This dynamic was the result of gradual attempts to modernize Afghan society, managed by the state but funded by foreign sources. The first sprouts of political activity initiated by Afghan citizens, rather than the state, were boosted by the adoption of a new Afghan constitution in 1964, which at the time was considered to be one of the most progressive in the Muslim world.³⁰ However, for the vast majority of the population, these changes had only minor implications. According to the “Population and Agricultural Survey of 500 Villages” conducted by the Afghan Ministry of Planning and published in 1963, approximately three percent of the population was literate. Over ninety percent of the population was engaged in basic food production, through farming land, herding, or a combination of the two.³¹ The economy of most families was thus self-subsistent, with many even producing their own clothes, shoes, and lamps.³² Relationships within local communities were mainly guided by tribal and Islamic principles and guaranteed by the local power holders—whether elders, *mullas*, or landowners.³³ In this context, the adoption of the constitution was impor-

²⁹ Interviews, Kabul, November 2008, April 2009.

³⁰ On this period, the classic reference is Louis Dupree, *Afghanistan* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1973). For a more contemporary perspective, see Robert D. Crews, *Afghan Modern: The History of a Global Nation* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2015).

³¹ Cited in Dupree, *Afghanistan*, 248.

³² Interviews, Balkh Province, Afghanistan, August 2008.

³³ Interviews, Kunduz Province, July 2008; Interviews, Balkh Province, August 2008; Interviews, Bamyan Province, August 2008; Interviews, Kabul, November 2008; Interviews, Paktia Province, November 2008; Interviews, Nangarhar Province, November 2008.

tant only for the limited group of people who depended on the state for their existence. Opposition groups began to form primarily within the milieu of Kabul University and other governmental educational institutions, where students arriving from rural areas found themselves outside the control of the traditional authority networks that prevailed within families and community or kinship groups, often for the first time.

In this context, various imported concepts, including communism and Islamism, provided the youth with new ways of conceptualizing the ruling order and their role within it. Students began to organize meetings and seminars, to distribute leaflets, and to recruit followers from among fellow students in opposition to other groupings. In a sense, their activities gradually translated into an intense struggle between proponents of communism and proponents of an Islamic state based on *shari'a* law that took place against the backdrop of the democratic era in Afghanistan.³⁴ However, they did not seek to generate support for their ideological claims within their home communities, either by attacking landowners or by opposing guarantors of Islamic and tribal norms. Instead, both communism and Islamism provided a relevant means of self-assertion for the youth within the new context. This was evident both from the composition of the Islamist groups, and from the strategies they chose to promote their goals.

Despite their Islamic objectives, there was no clear correlation between membership in the Islamist groups and the religious education of their proponents.³⁵ Indeed, at times students of the Theological Faculty tried to avoid contact with Islamist groups, since they did not share their political impetus for challenging the ruling order. Unlike their fellow students from technical fields, whose motivation to oppose the government stemmed from a lack of opportunities available to them after finishing their studies, students of theology had their future more often secured in their home provinces, regardless of the existing government of the country.³⁶ Islamist ideas did find relevance in some of the urban and district-level religious schools, but here, too, they served primarily to help the youth assert themselves outside the circles of authority represented by the elders,³⁷ and as such remained exclusive to students who could read and write.³⁸ Mean-

³⁴ Interviews, Kabul, November 2008, April 2009.

³⁵ Among its leaders were students from technical faculties such as Hekmatyar and Massoud.

³⁶ Interview, Samangan Province, October 2008.

³⁷ For instance, in the famous *madrasa* in Mazar-e-Sharif, one of the teachers, inspired by the ideas of the Muslim Brotherhood, regularly organized demonstrations of youth against the government, which usually ended in bloodshed when government soldiers had to neutralize him and his students by means of stones and sticks. Interview, Mazar-e-Sharif, November 2008.

³⁸ Interviews, Maimana (Faryab Province), Afghanistan, April 2009.

while, they found little traction among many *mullas*, especially in the rural areas, who were themselves guarantors of the ruling order in their communities.³⁹ Indeed, the Islamists did not even seek to spread their message beyond the institutional framework created by the government. For one thing, their ideological claims were relevant only among those who depended on the government for their existence. In a situation where the vast majority of the population continued to live according to tribal and Islamic norms, guaranteed by elders at the local level, their message could hardly gain any significant support. More importantly, however, within the ruling order in their home communities, these young men in fact lacked the authority to legitimize such actions in Islamic terms.

Initially the government did not consider either of these communist or Islamist groups to be a potent threat. Usually it was skirmishes among the different student factions that were the most violent, and the measures the government took to counter such actions were proportional to the level of importance it attached to them.⁴⁰ This situation changed only when Mohammad Daoud, a former prime minister and member of the royal family, seized power from his cousin King Zahir Shah and proclaimed a republic in 1973, under the pretext of reviving the Islamic order in the country. In this new context, the claims of the Islamists were perceived as potentially threatening the legitimacy of Daoud's government. Daoud banned all political parties, but he particularly targeted groups inspired by the Muslim Brotherhood, whose leaders were continuously purged, imprisoned, or killed. Nevertheless, these policies only motivated the Islamists to increase their activity. In June 1974, Daoud's government arrested two hundred young Islamists who had gathered to discuss the blueprint for an Islamic republic where the *shari'a* would be implemented in totality.⁴¹ In 1975 they managed to organize more attacks against the regime, especially in Nangarhar, Kabul, and Panshir.⁴² Their actions did not increase the relevance of the Islamist cause among the population, however, since the ideal that the two actors—Daoud and the Islamists—fought over was not

³⁹ Badakhshan is a notable exception. *Mullas* from there usually travelled to Pakistan for their religious education, and thus some began to discuss and advocate the ideas of the Muslim Brotherhood as early as the 1960s. Interviews, Kunduz Province, July 2008.

⁴⁰ As such, when one student named Nasim was organizing communist demonstrations in the Sayed Karam district center in the 1960s, he was dismissed from the school for two or three months, but was later accepted back. Interviews, Sayed Karam (Paktia Province), October 2008.

⁴¹ Cited in Dilip Hiro, *War Without End: The Rise of Islamist Terrorism and Global Response* (London: Routledge, 2002), 198.

⁴² Interviews, Kabul, November 2008. See Tahir Amin, "Afghan Resistance: Past, Present, and Future," *Asian Survey* 24, no. 4 (April 1984): 373–99.

Islam, but the state. In both cases, Islam provided a means to legitimize each group's own rule (or claims for rule) in opposition to existing power rivals, but it had little consequence for the population living according to Islamic norms guaranteed on the local level.

Prior to the communist coup d'état, appeals to Islam played a significant role in Afghan power dynamics. However, Islam's role was not ideological, in the sense that it was not one among competing ideologies; rather, the appeals to Islam were a tactic and a means of self-assertion. They served as a relevant legitimization strategy for both the existing government and its opponents: that is, those who depended on the state for their existence. In this context, the population was increasingly dragged into the conflict, but neither side attempted to win them over, because the relevance of all those aspiring for power—whether the government, the communists, or the Islamists—was not particularly dependent on popular support. In principle, the power dynamics that followed the communist overthrow in 1978 were thus a continuation of a two-decade-long growing conflict within a group of actors, which in the new context had far more severe implications for the population at large.

The communist coup d'état took place unexpectedly on April 27, 1978: after killing Mohammad Daoud and his family, the communist group quickly gained control over the governmental apparatus. However, ensuing developments were characterized primarily by internal struggles for power between leaders of different factions, which were settled only by the Soviet invasion in December 1979.⁴³ Despite the chaotic situation within the ruling group, from the very start communist leaders also adopted strategies to prevent potential opposition to their rule. On the one hand, they tried to couch their claims to legitimacy in terms of Islam. For example, they organized a group of local religious scholars to openly support the new government, announced a decree outlawing any bride price except the *mahr*—which was set to a maximum of 300 afghani, under the pretext that this was the exact equivalent of the amount in the Qur'an itself—and later established the first ministry of religious affairs in Afghan history.⁴⁴ On the other

⁴³ Nur Muhammad Taraki and Hafizullah Amin's faction, Khalq, advocated a militantly Marxist regime independent of the Soviet Union; their claims were opposed by the Parcham faction, led by Babrak Karmal, who had closer ties with the Soviet rulers. On this conflict see, for instance, Barnett Rubin, *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan: State Formation and Collapse in the International System* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002); Odd Arne Westad, "The Islamist Defiance: Iran and Afghanistan," in *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 288–330.

⁴⁴ Interviews, Kabul, November 2008, April 2009. The Soviets and the communist government also distributed leaflets that contained slogans such as "No Code, Fellow Countrymen! We are children of one country of Afghanistan. . . we are

hand, from the very beginning they focused on eliminating their perceived ideological opponents, and thousands of people were persecuted and killed on suspicion of having ties with the Islamist movement and its exiled leadership in Pakistan.⁴⁵

In this period, the power dynamics in the country were determined by the attempts of existing actors to survive in the changed context. In provincial and district centers, most of the previous opponents of the communist groupings began to terrorize the population by targeting governmental facilities. By night, the opposition began to put posters up on walls threatening students not to go to the schools, which were portrayed as centers of communist propaganda. When some children were killed for attending school, families had to adopt absurd measures to provide education for their children without joining any side. For instance, Mohammad's family in Mazar-e-Sharif decided to send their son to live in the dormitory (even though it was only a few hundred meters from their home), and his mother then secretly visited him two or three times a month to give him food and money.⁴⁶ In the same vein, the government also began to terrorize the urban population in order to secure support and necessary manpower. Government officials started to recruit young people into both army and youth organizations. Initially, this recruitment was voluntary—many young people were motivated by the prospect of attaining high posts—although students were also forced to join the youth organizations in order to avoid troubles during their exams. When Hafizullah Amin came to power after the assassination of Nur Muhammad Taraki in March 1979, however, he introduced forced recruitment, and the only way to avoid the army then became fleeing to the countryside and joining the mujahedin, or leaving the country as refugees.⁴⁷

While the situation in the towns gradually stabilized after the purging of the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (the official name of the communist party in Afghanistan) and the invasion of the Red Army in December 1979, life for those who stayed in the villages was enormously difficult, especially since they had previously been far less affected by the political struggles. The greatest problems arose in those villages and regions where the government began to implement its reforms, primarily in rural

followers of one sacred religion." See "PsyWar Leaflet Archive," accessed February 12, 2018, <http://www.psywar.org/apdsearchform.php?Search=Search&war=Soviet-Afghan%>.

⁴⁵ Interviews, Kunduz Province, July 2008; Interviews, Samangan Province, October 2008; Interviews, Mazar-e-Sharif, November 2008; Interviews, Helmand Province, April 2009.

⁴⁶ Interviews, Mazar-e-Sharif, November 2008.

⁴⁷ Interviews, Samangan Province, October 2008; Interviews, Kabul, November 2008; Interviews, Mazar-e-Sharif, November 2008.

areas adjacent to provincial towns. Here, despite general enthusiasm for land redistribution, most people from landless and poor families remained afraid of the landowners, who in turn—together with the local *mullas*—themselves feared the appointed representatives of the government in the villages. Meanwhile, news spread about the murder and imprisonment of thousands of *mullas* and other potential opponents of the new regime. Consequently, in some areas landowners even took part in the measuring of land, and invited government officials to join them for lunch.⁴⁸ Some distributed their land among sons and cousins in order to avoid confiscation.⁴⁹ However, the introduction of other reforms, especially the decree outlawing any bride price except the *mahr*, increased tensions in the villages.

Since the new government had little power in rural areas except among local communist supporters, it was not difficult for former landowners and local *mullas*—those who were to be eliminated by the communist regime—to gradually resume their role of guarantors of the ruling order at the local level.⁵⁰ It was impossible to remain neutral in this new context, and restoring traditional relationships within the community automatically meant opposing the new government. These power dynamics also extended into areas that remained outside the reach of the communist reforms. In these areas, *mullas*, tribal elders, and some of the landowners—usually, the only people with links to the outside world and, therefore, information about the new government's persecution of the existing guarantors of the ruling order—took on the new role of organizing opposition against the state.⁵¹

This new context also provided opportunities for self-assertion to young men from peasant families who, by staying in the villages and gradually learning to fight and command guerilla forces, established their position in the local communities in a way previously unknown. Originally fighting with sticks and axes, these young men were later trained in Pakistan; however, even then they were left largely on their own to define strategies at the local level, coming to control certain areas and politically manage their inhabitants. Although they were affiliated with particular parties in exile in Pakistan and Iran, which provided them with weapons, they were left to secure their existence solely with local resources. At night, therefore, they would return to the villages, whose inhabitants were compelled to feed them regularly. They also began to levy the so-called *wushur*, a tax in kind, from those who did not have the funds to leave the countryside and were

⁴⁸ Interviews, Kunduz Province, July 2008.

⁴⁹ Interviews, Nangarhar Province, April 2009.

⁵⁰ Interviews, Balkh Province, October 2008; Interviews, Kunduz Province, July 2008; Interviews, Helmand Province, April 2009.

⁵¹ Interviews, Balkh Province, August 2008; Interviews, Bamyan Province, August 2008.

bound to stay in their villages and work in the fields; moreover, in some cases they directly occupied the land of families who lived in exile.⁵² As such, while opposition originally formed spontaneously at the village level, its proponents sooner or later began to organize into hierarchical structures according to the territories they controlled. In this sense, appeals to jihad served as a legitimization strategy, while the external context defined by the communist government and the Soviet presence created circumstances in which commanders and fighters self-asserted against each other within the new ruling order of internal opposition.

Such dynamics also determined the relationships among those who were supposed to guarantee the ruling order of the opposition—that is, the founding fathers of the Islamist groupings who were now exiled in Pakistan and Iran. In these new circumstances—in which actual fighting was carried out by commanders within the country, and where their role lay primarily in representing the opposition as a whole to international supporters and donors—the exiles' leaders began to self-assert against other actors claiming leadership of the Afghan opposition.⁵³ The external context thus led to the creation of a new ruling order in exile, which determined the power dynamics among those that depended on it for their existence—both the various political parties, and ordinary people in refugee camps. The parties struggled, however, to maintain credibility. Originally families were asked to send their sons to the jihad as a duty, later by appeal to tribal customs. If such claims were rejected by elders who posited that such customs had no validity outside of their home communities, the opposition leaders argued that each family which had land in Afghanistan had to send a son to the fight. In some cases, they sought to attract religious authorities in order to secure legitimization for their strategies, but these offers were often refused—especially since it became increasingly evident that different interest groups were misusing the notion of the holy war and other ideals for their own self-assertion.⁵⁴

The costly victory in 1989, celebrated by Afghans in the refugee camps and rural areas of the country as their own nation's triumph over communism, was actually determined primarily by a change in the external context. In reality, the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan was mainly a result of the internal untenability of the invasion in the context of other reforms

⁵² Interviews, Kunduz Province, July 2008; Interviews, Balkh Province, August 2008; Interviews, Kabul, November 2008, April 2009.

⁵³ For an overview of the actors claiming leadership of the opposition, see, for instance, Shah M. Tarzi, "Politics of the Afghan Resistance Movement: Cleavages, Disunity, and Fragmentation," *Asian Survey* 31, no. 6 (June 1991): 479–95.

⁵⁴ Interviews, Kabul, November 2008, April 2009; Interviews, Mazar-e-Sharif, November 2008, April 2009.

introduced by Gorbachev within the USSR—which were themselves part of an ideological struggle within the Soviet hierarchy, driven by self-assertion in the name of communism.⁵⁵ However, if most Afghans saw this moment as important because it promised to bring an end to pointless suffering, for leaders of the opposition movement it primarily implied the loss of political legitimacy as a group. By linking their existence with the opposition to the Russians, they gained incomparable potential as political actors. However, the rather stable external context provided by the communist government and the Soviet invasion led to the creation of new autonomous ruling orders, both in rural areas within the country and in exile in Pakistan and Iran. Consequently, some actors began to self-assert within those orders, acting as guarantors of the opposition toward its perceived corrupters from other factions or parties. When the external context determined by the Soviet invasion and communist rule began to collapse (with Najibullah's Soviet-backed government managing to survive until 1992), the ideal in whose name they organized lost relevance, and so, too, did their legitimization strategies. These actors' relevance was not measured by support among the people; on the contrary, they were fully dependent on the ruling order of the state for their self-assertion. Therefore, their only strategy to survive in the new context was to fight against their previous co-fighters, in a common quest for power within the Afghan state.

Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated that the “long 1989” challenged the basic assumption on which both Cold War studies and common-sense conceptions of politics were based—that ideologies always compete with each other. In this sense, it has become evident that the apparent ideological struggles leading to the collapse of the communist bloc and the end of the Cold War were mere manifestations of politics, not its objective.

However, this analysis has also brought attention to a more important issue—namely, that of epistemology. Specifically, revisiting the events that led to 1989 from the perspective of Islam's role in politics has revealed a problem with conceptualizing politics only in terms of ideological struggle: such an approach confuses ideology with the state. Consequently, it seeks to interpret any opposition within a state as a reaction to contradictions that the state ideology fails to accommodate. Such a conceptualization of ideological struggle, however, probably best reflects the existing power relations in Western countries, where citizens often depend for their self-

⁵⁵ On the Soviet withdrawal, see Artemy Kalinovsky, *A Long Goodbye: The Soviet Withdrawal from Afghanistan* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011).

assertion on the ruling order created by the idea of the state. As a result, opposition forms mostly within this ideology, which translates into an apparent ideological struggle among various actors legitimizing their self-assertion outside of existing power relations—on behalf of the population at large—by proposing new ways in which an ideal state can be achieved.

However, ethnographic research in Afghanistan and Central Asia has shown that the idea(l) of the state is only one of the ideologies in the name of which various actors might self-assert within their existing contexts. Indeed, it has become apparent that power dynamics within one state can be determined by different ruling orders, depending on the legitimization strategies of existing actors who self-assert on behalf of members of a particular society. In this sense, this chapter has demonstrated that ideas are the determinant of any power dynamics, but not as abstract or universal ideals: rather, ideas serve as a tactic of self-assertion for particular actors that is inherently context-bound and thus non-transferable.

Seen from this perspective, the major flaw of Fukuyama's thesis lay in the fact that he assessed political developments in general through a lens of only one particular ideology—namely, that of liberalism. If this epistemological bias could have been overlooked within the overall enthusiasm of the 1989 events, it has become impossible to justify thirty years later, especially when both scholars and decision-makers struggle to account for the actual power dynamics that determine power relations in both Muslim countries and the West. This chapter has demonstrated that this is possible only by revisiting the assumptions that shape our approach to the study of politics—something for which important historical changes, such as 1989, provide a unique opportunity.

CHAPTER 3

European Lessons for China: Tiananmen 1989 and Beyond*

Martin K. Dimitrov

1989 was a global event whose various national manifestations continue to impact world politics today, both directly and indirectly. This essay on China and communist Europe focuses on the “long 1989”: that is, the antecedents of 1989, the year itself, and the legacies of 1989. Specifically, the chapter examines four questions: (1) Were the Tiananmen Square protests a response to perestroika in the Soviet Union and its satellites? (2) Did the Tiananmen massacre in June 1989 in turn affect the trajectory of change in East-Central Europe and the Soviet Union in 1989–1991? (3) Did the ultimate fall of communism in Europe have an impact on China in the wake of Tiananmen? (4) Finally, has China’s post-Tiananmen persistence as a high-growth resilient authoritarian regime served as a model that the Russian leaders are now trying to emulate as they search for ways to maintain their grip on power? This chapter explores these questions about diffusion and learning by relying primarily on internal-circulation (*neibu*) Chinese materials, as well as on archival materials from the Soviet Union and Bulgaria.

The chapter argues that, although the underlying causes of Tiananmen were mostly domestic, external events like Gorbachev’s visit to Beijing in May 1989 nevertheless impacted the tactics of protesters in April–June 1989. However, the existing evidence suggests that the Tiananmen massacre played a very modest role in the collapse of communism in Europe in 1989–1991. Rather than impacting the tactics of protesters, Tiananmen affected only the decision-making of the top leadership in

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countries like the GDR, Romania, Albania, and Bulgaria, where leaders contemplated staying in power through a “Chinese scenario,” a strategy that ultimately proved untenable. Conversely, Beijing learned a lot from the collapse of the European communist regimes. The Chinese leadership took three main lessons from the Eastern bloc and the Soviet Union: (1) high economic growth is imperative for regime resilience; (2) political pluralism and glasnost may damage the Communist Party’s monopoly on power; and (3) ethnic tensions should be mitigated in order to avoid systemic instability. The leadership drew these lessons early on, and their continuous, successful implementation remains the foundation of regime resilience in China to the present day. Recently, China’s ability to learn from the Central and Eastern European collapses has made it into an attractive model for other authoritarian regimes. In a radical departure from the Soviet unwillingness to learn from China, Putin’s Russia has emerged as one of the most eager students of the Chinese model of resilient authoritarianism.

The chapter allows us to address the important issue of the conditions that facilitate diffusion across political regimes. This question has received attention from students of democratization, who have developed theories of the diffusion of democratic norms and values to authoritarian countries. Some of these theories focus on structural conditions that facilitate diffusion, such as geographic proximity, similarity of context, and neighborhood (or regional) effects.¹ One example of this dynamic would be demonstration effects, where protesters in Prague in 1989 were emboldened by the successful rallies they observed in Berlin and Leipzig.² Other theories analyze how structural factors impact the choices of two sets of strategic actors: namely, the opposition and the government. In terms of the opposition, the strength of its networks with Western civil society, or with opposition groups in neighboring countries, strongly influences the likelihood of mounting a successful challenge to the regime.³ As far as the government is concerned, vulnerability to Western leverage, as expressed through condi-

¹ Barbara Wejnert, “Diffusion, Development, and Democracy 1800–1999,” *American Sociological Review* 70, no. 1 (February 2005): 53–81.

² Timothy Garton Ash, *The Magic Lantern: The Revolutions of '89 Witnessed in Warsaw, Budapest, Berlin, and Prague* (New York: Random House, 1990). For a theoretical treatment of the mechanisms that make diffusion possible, see Mark Kramer, “The Dynamics of Diffusion in the Soviet Bloc and the Impact on Regime Survival,” in *Why Communism Did Not Collapse: Understanding Authoritarian Regime Resilience in Asia and Europe*, ed. Martin K. Dimitrov, 149–81 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

³ Valerie Bunce and Sharon L. Wolchik, “Bringing Down Dictators: Waves of Democratic Change in Postcommunist Europe and Eurasia,” in Dimitrov, *Why Communism Did Not Collapse*, 123–48.

tionality agreements, sanctions, and diplomatic or military pressure, may create favorable conditions for democratization, especially when economic, intergovernmental, technocratic, social, and information linkages to the West are also at high levels.⁴ What unites these theories is that they focus on examples of diffusion that occur rapidly in “waves” of democratization, where governments are unable to resist democratizing pressure from external forces or from the domestic opposition.⁵

This chapter extends these theories by examining cases of *learning* from diffusion, where regimes that observe diffusion engage in policy changes aimed at resisting diffusion and solidifying their hold on power. A question arises as to why some regimes learn successfully, whereas others do not. In the context of the countries examined in this chapter, China and post-Yeltsin Russia drew lessons from diffusion, whereas the Soviet Union and its European satellites were unable to do so. This chapter finds that the crucial requirement for learning is *time*. Regimes are more likely to engage in learning when they have the time to do so, when they survive long enough to allow for policy changes to be designed and implemented. How can regimes ensure that they have the necessary longevity? Strong economic performance and strong repressive capacity may increase the ability of a state to survive crises. This is amply illustrated by Central and Eastern Europe, where economic decline and inability to effectively repress the population led to the ultimate demise of these regimes. In contrast, China had both the economic wherewithal and the repressive capacity to overcome the challenges it faced in 1989. Yet, it is no less important that the time one gains through these factors be used effectively for policy innovation, as demonstrated by China’s flurry of activity aimed at building popular loyalty to the regime not only through sustained economic performance, but also through the legal protection of certain rights and freedoms and through state-sponsored patriotism. Ultimately, regimes that survive are those led by popular incumbents.⁶ This explains why Putin and Medvedev, who are concerned about maintaining their popularity, have consciously attempted to copy the Chinese model as a way of fortifying the current authoritarian regime.⁷

⁴ Steven Levitsky and Lucan Way, *Competitive Authoritarianism: The Origins and Evolution of Hybrid Regimes in the Post-Cold War Era* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

⁵ Samuel P. Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991).

⁶ Martin K. Dimitrov, “The Popular Autocrats,” in *Debates on Democratization*, ed. Larry Diamond, Marc F. Plattner and Philip J. Costopoulos (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010), 232–35.

⁷ Martin K. Dimitrov, “The Resilient Authoritarians,” *Current History* 107, no. 705 (January 2008): 24–29.

This chapter therefore enriches diffusion studies by introducing the concepts of learning and gradual institutional change over time.⁸ These policy changes take time to be developed and implemented; hence, we cannot analyze them if we focus on critical junctures, which are episodes of condensed time, when change is possible because the usual constraints on the behavior of actors are removed.⁹ Instead, we need to adopt a longer perspective, where we analyze institutional change over an extended period of time, which sometimes may be as long as a couple of decades. By taking a long view of institutional change, we can think about the long 1989, the effects of which are still felt today across the communist and post-communist worlds.

This essay is based on several types of primary sources. Most valuable are archival sources from Central and Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union, and China. Relevant collections include the Communist Party, State Security apparatus, and Foreign Ministry archives of individual countries. Especially useful are documents from the 1980s in communist Europe and from the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s in China. Although such documents are available for most Central and Eastern European countries, access to them is severely restricted in Russia and remains completely off limits in China. For China, the *Tiananmen Papers* are the closest approximation of an archival source for the 1989 events.¹⁰ Although they do provide us with an insider perspective on elite decision-making, disputes about their authenticity serve to caution researchers against relying exclusively on them.¹¹ The gaps in the documentary record must be filled with a second source of data: in this case, personal memoirs and diaries. The memoirs of Mikhail Gorbachev,¹² foreign minister Eduard Shevardnadze,¹³ Gorbachev's translator Pavel Palazchenko,¹⁴ and

⁸ James Mahoney and Kathleen Thelen, "A Theory of Gradual Institutional Change," in *Explaining Institutional Change: Ambiguity, Agency, and Power*, ed. James Mahoney and Kathleen Thelen (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 1–37; Paul Pierson, *Politics in Time: History, Institutions, and Social Analysis* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004); Anna Grzymala-Busse, "Time Will Tell? Temporality and the Analysis of Causal Mechanisms and Processes," *Comparative Political Studies* 44, no. 9 (2011): 1267–97.

⁹ On critical junctures, see Ruth Berins Collier and David Collier, *Shaping the Political Arena: Critical Junctures, the Labor Movement, and Regime Dynamics in Latin America* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991).

¹⁰ Zhang Liang, comp., *The Tiananmen Papers*, ed. Andrew J. Nathan and Perry Link (New York: Public Affairs, 2001).

¹¹ Alfred L. Chan, with a rejoinder by Andrew J. Nathan, "The Tiananmen Papers Revisited," *The China Quarterly* 177 (March 2004): 190–214.

¹² Mikhail Gorbachev, *Zhizn' i reformy* (Moscow: Novosti, 1995).

¹³ Eduard Shevardnadze, *Kogda rukhnul zheleznyi zanaves* (Moscow: Evropa, 2009).

¹⁴ Pavel Palazchenko, *My Years with Gorbachev and Shevardnadze: The Memoir of a Soviet Interpreter* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997).

some high-ranking Soviet diplomats contain valuable insights about the process of normalization of Sino-Soviet relations.¹⁵ Foreign minister Qian Qichen's memoirs are similarly valuable for a Chinese perspective on normalization.¹⁶ Diaries shed light on the opaque process of elite decision-making in the Soviet Union and China: the diaries of Gorbachev's aides, and of former Chinese premiers Zhao Ziyang and Li Peng, are especially helpful here.¹⁷ A third source is internal-circulation (*neibu*) materials from China, consisting of non-classified publications like *Cankao yaowen* and *Cankao xiaoxi* and classified material with the designation of *mimi/jimi* (secret/top secret) like *Neibu canyue*, *Neibu cankao*, *Neibu qingkuang*, *Qingkuang huibian*, and *Gaige neican*. These publications, which often focused on international news, were read by leading government officials at various levels of the political system. Access to them allows us to reconstruct the types of information to which Chinese leaders had access when they were making decisions about how to respond to the momentous changes in Central and Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Taken together and supplemented by academic writings in Chinese, Russian, and English, these documents reveal the complex and prolonged process of learning from Europe that has unfolded in China since 1989.

This essay is organized as follows. Section I sets the Tiananmen events against the backdrop of the normalization of Sino-Soviet relations and Gorbachev's historic visit to Beijing, which simultaneously emboldened the protesters and made the government less willing to compromise with them. Section II discusses why China's violent suppression of protesters in June 1989 largely had no impact on opposition tactics in Central and Eastern Europe, but did affect the calculus of some governments in the region. Section III discusses the evolution of Chinese responses to the collapse of communism in Europe, whereas Section IV focuses on the reaction to the Soviet collapse. Section V discusses the impact of China on post-1991 Russia, revealing that, as Russia became more authoritarian, interest in the political lessons provided by China expanded dramatically. Section VI con-

¹⁵ A. M. Aleksandrov-Agentov, *Ot Kollontai do Gorbacheva: Vospominaniia diplomata* (Moscow: Mezhdunarodnye otnosheniia, 1994); M. S. Kapitsa, *Na raznykh paralleliakh: Zapiski diplomata* (Moscow: Kniga i biznes, 1996); A. A. Brezhnev, *Kitai: Ternisty put' k dobrososedstvu: Vospominaniia i razmyshleniia* (Moscow: Mezhdunarodnye otnosheniia, 1998).

¹⁶ Qian Qichen, *Ten Episodes in China's Diplomacy* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2005).

¹⁷ *V Politbiuro TsK KPSS: Po zapisiam Anatoliia Cherniaeva, Vadima Medvedeva, Georgiia Shakhmazarova: 1985–1991* (Moscow: Al'pina Biznes Buks, 2006); Zhao Ziyang, *Prisoner of the State: The Secret Journal of Premier Zhao Ziyang* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2009); Li Peng, *Liu Si Riji* (El Monte, CA: Xidian Chubanshe, 2010).

cludes the chapter by offering some reflections on the barriers to diffusion and to authoritarian learning which are presented by geography, culture, ideology, and regime type.

I. The Tiananmen Events against the Backdrop of the Sino-Soviet Split

It is appropriate to begin a discussion of the Tiananmen events by situating them in the context of the normalization of Sino-Soviet relations, which culminated with Gorbachev's visit to China in May 1989. The temporal overlapping of the two events is important, because it gave international visibility to the protests (hundreds of foreign journalists had come to Beijing to cover the visit). In addition, the protesters felt empowered by the visit of the father of perestroika to Beijing, thinking that the leadership would be more likely to make concessions to them, in order to allow for the visit to proceed smoothly.

The Normalization of Sino-Soviet Relations

In the initial decades after the establishment of the People's Republic of China, the Soviet Union and China had a rocky relationship that oscillated between close friendship and a border war.¹⁸ From the 1960s until the 1980s, Sino-Soviet relations remained in a stalemate. A breakthrough occurred in 1985, when Deng Xiaoping asked the visiting Romanian leader Nicolae Ceaușescu to relay an oral message to Gorbachev that the withdrawal of Vietnamese troops from Cambodia would be a decisive prerequisite for normalization.¹⁹ Gorbachev received Deng's message, and the troop withdrawal began in 1986. In the same year, a decision was made to stop jamming Radio Beijing broadcasts in the Soviet Union, an important signal that the relationship was improving.²⁰ In a speech in Vladivostok in July 1986, Gorbachev publicly expressed his interest in improving relations during a summit meeting with his Chinese counterparts. Subsequent visits by the leaders of Central and Eastern European countries like Hungary, East Germany, Bulgaria, and Romania played an important role in paving the way for Gorbachev's visit, as did the trip of Soviet foreign minister

¹⁸ For a comprehensive treatment of this relationship, see Lorenz M. Lüthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split: Cold War in the Communist World* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008).

¹⁹ Qian, *Ten Episodes in China's Diplomacy*, 17.

²⁰ Russian Government Archive of Contemporary History (RGANI) Fond 89 per. 18 d. 105 (1986).

Eduard Shevardnadze to Beijing in February 1989.²¹ Normalization was completed when Gorbachev held talks with Deng Xiaoping, Zhao Ziyang, and Li Peng during his visit to China on May 15–18, 1989. These talks occurred against the backdrop of large-scale protests in Tiananmen Square.

The Tiananmen Square Events

The April–June 1989 events represented the most serious threat to the hegemony of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) since the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949. Although at their peak the protests encompassed as many as 181 cities in every Chinese province,²² the main locus of events was Beijing. In the capital, the protests began as public mourning for communist official Hu Yaobang by grief-stricken students and intellectuals. A reformist who was sympathetic to student protests in 1986, Hu had been purged from his position as General Secretary in 1987 and died of a heart attack on April 15, 1989. Students in Tiananmen Square demanded a posthumous rehabilitation of Hu, but also called for freedom of speech and assembly, as well as for democratic elections within the framework of a single-party system. Above all, the students wanted dialogue with the government, but the various petitions they tried to lodge with the authorities were ignored.²³ The number of protesters continued to rise, and the government became increasingly nervous. While General Secretary Zhao Ziyang was on a state visit to North Korea, Premier Li Peng managed to convince Deng Xiaoping that the movement threatened the legitimacy of the Communist Party, and that an editorial labeling it as *dongluan* (variously translated into English as turmoil or disturbance) be published in the *People's Daily* on April 26, 1989.²⁴ The editorial radicalized the students, who felt that the government perceived them as unpatriotic.²⁵

²¹ On Chinese foreign relations with Eastern Europe, see M. L. Titarenko, ed. 40 *Let KNR* (Moscow: Nauka, 1989), 372–78.

²² Zhang, *The Tiananmen Papers*, 398.

²³ On the April 18, 1989 version of the Seven Demands, see *ibid.*, 26.

²⁴ “It Is Necessary to Take a Clear-Cut Stand Against Disturbances” in *Beijing Spring*, 206–8. In his diary, Li denies that he played a crucial role in convincing Deng to authorize the editorial and subsequently take the decision to use force. See Li, *Liu Si Riji*. Li's argument is not supported by the bulk of the available evidence. Zhao Ziyang's memoirs also argue that Li played a central role in shaping Deng's decision to use force against the student protesters. See Zhao, *Prisoner of the State*.

²⁵ Melanie Manion, “Introduction: Reluctant Duelists: The Logic of the 1989 Protests and Massacre,” in *Beijing Spring, 1989: Confrontation and Conflict: The Basic Documents*, ed. Michel Oksenberg, Lawrence R. Sullivan, and Marc Lambert (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1990), xiii–xlii.

After April 26, there was a gradual escalation of the tension between the students and the government that culminated with the bloody massacre on June 4. Knowing that Mikhail Gorbachev's arrival in Beijing for historic talks on the normalization of Sino-Soviet relations made the leadership especially vulnerable to the public humiliation of protests in Tiananmen Square, the students not only refused to leave the square, but also began a hunger strike on May 13. Rather than backing down, the government decided to suffer the embarrassment of amending Gorbachev's program and held a welcoming ceremony at the airport. After Gorbachev left Beijing, the leadership promptly imposed martial law in the capital on May 20. By this point, workers had also begun to rally in Tiananmen Square.²⁶ But rather than joining forces, students and workers chose to protest in different parts of the square. Immobilized by indecisiveness, the students could not agree on their tactics. Exasperated that the protests had been going for over a month, the leadership decided to use force to clear the square. Even though nobody died in the square itself, poorly trained troops killed at least a thousand civilians on their way to Tiananmen. By the morning of June 4, the square had been cleared of protesters.²⁷

After June 4, the leadership began to draw conclusions from the Tiananmen events. The culmination of this process was the Fourth Plenum of the Thirteenth Central Committee, which took place on June 23–24, 1989. The key part of the Plenum was Li Peng's report, which affirmed the punishment of Zhao Ziyang, who was forced to resign from his position as General Secretary for opposing the imposition of martial law.²⁸ Zhao's case highlighted the importance of maintaining party unity and vigorously opposing factionalism. There was a retrenchment in terms of political and economic reform, since the plenum found that Zhao's mistakes of abandoning opposition to bourgeois liberalization (that is, Western ideas) and neglecting the building of party spirit (loyalty of party members to the Party) and spiritual civilization (correct ideological and moral thinking among the general public) brought about the spring 1989 events.²⁹ The Plenum called for strengthening party unity, improving ideological work, and resisting Western influence. It also called for implementing measures that were popular with the masses, such as fighting corruption and official

²⁶ Andrew G. Walder and Gong Xiaoxia, "Workers in the Tiananmen Protests: The Politics of the Beijing Workers' Autonomous Federation," *The Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs* 29 (January 1993): 1–29.

²⁷ Discussion based on Zhang, *The Tiananmen Papers* and Manion, "Reluctant Duelists."

²⁸ See Robert F. Ash, "Quarterly Chronicle and Documentation," *The China Quarterly* 128 (December 1991): 865–906, specifically 888–901.

²⁹ Li, *Liu Si Riji*.

profiteering and cleaning up companies. In terms of economic reform, there was a retrenchment that lasted until 1992. But it was political reform that suffered the toughest blow as a result of Tiananmen: although the party emphasized the importance of democracy and the rule of law, the prospects for a more open consultative system of governance were dashed. Three decades on, China remains firmly committed to single-party rule, even though the great majority of communist states in the world made a definitive break with their official state ideology in 1989.

II. The Impact of China on Eastern Europe

When examining how the events in China impacted Central and Eastern European countries, it is necessary to disaggregate the responses of the opposition from those of the governments. Although opposition groups were not directly affected by the events in China, the governments of individual Central and Eastern European countries carefully evaluated the Tiananmen protests and attempted to learn from them. However, economic decline and weak repressive capacity did not allow these regimes to follow a “Chinese scenario” for retaining power.

Eastern European Masses and Tiananmen

The available documents indicate that Tiananmen did not have an impact on mass protest in Central and Eastern Europe. Although protests erupted outside the Chinese embassies in Warsaw, Budapest, and East Berlin, the events in Beijing did not provide a framework for protest action to be copied by the masses in Europe (even though the East German Stasi worried it might). This was predominantly because Europe was introspective, and protesters in Prague took their cues from demonstration participants in Leipzig and Berlin, rather than from those in Beijing. Geographical distance, cultural differences, an aversion to learning from negative examples of protest, and the success of the authorities in repressing publication of information about the events all played a role in shifting the attention of Central and Eastern European publics away from China.

Eastern European Elites and Tiananmen

In contrast to the publics of Central and Eastern Europe, the elites were following the events in China closely. However, their reaction to Tiananmen was anything but monolithic. There were three discrete responses among Central and Eastern European leaders: some condemned the massacre; others contemplated using a “Chinese solution” of their own, but did

not follow through with it; and still others actively used repression against protesters. This divergence of responses to Tiananmen gives us an opportunity to answer two questions that are relevant to understanding regime resilience in China. The first is when communist leaders decide to use violence against mass protests. A second, related question is when this violence is effective in propping up the regime.

Condemnation of Tiananmen

Following a “Chinese scenario” was not an option for countries that had made significant strides toward political liberalization by the time of the Tiananmen massacre. Political liberalization entailed a gradual erosion of the Communist Party’s power and the emergence of opposition forces. In general, when opposition forces grew stronger, the Party’s grip over the repressive apparatus became looser. Even though State Security and the army remained under party control, they could no longer be counted on to obey orders in case of massive protests. This is clear from the examples of Hungary, Poland, and the Soviet Union. By June 4, 1989, Hungary had gone further than any Central or Eastern European state in terms of dismantling the communist system. This explains why Hungary also used the most resolute language to condemn the events in China.³⁰ In Poland, the response was more muted. When an official statement was issued in Warsaw on June 7, the first round of the historic June 1989 elections had taken place, but the extent of popular support for Solidarity became fully evident only on June 18, when the second round of elections concluded. The Polish government, therefore, expressed sympathy for the victims in early June, but also made clear that it hoped these events would not have a negative impact on Sino-Polish relations.³¹ As the leading democratic reformers in Central and Eastern Europe, Hungary and Poland had to condemn Tiananmen and thus side with major Western powers like the United States and France, which were the leading proponents of imposing sanctions on China. Countries that had made significant strides toward political

³⁰ Official statements talked of “shock” at this “horrible tragedy” and the repression of “fundamental human rights.” See Czesław Tubilewicz, “Central European Moralistic Diplomacy: An Evolution of Budapest, Prague, and Warsaw’s Stance on Human Rights in China, 1989–1994” in *Central and Eastern Europe in Transition*, ed. Frank H. Columbus (Commack, NY: Nova Science Publishers, 1998), vol. 1, 21–28, at 23. Prior to June 4, when Soviet and Central Eastern European media were covering the events in China in a subdued manner, Hungary was the only Central Eastern European state to report Gorbachev’s statement that economic reform would be impossible without political reform. Zhang, *The Tiananmen Papers*, 276.

³¹ Tubilewicz, “Central European Moralistic Diplomacy,” 22.

liberalization by June 1989 did not want to be seen by the international community as supporting repression in another communist state.

The Soviet reaction was more ambiguous. Gorbachev did express regret about the events in Tiananmen and sympathy for the victims during a June 6, 1989 speech to the Congress of People's Deputies.³² A few days later, the Foreign Ministry spokesman said that the authorities were "extremely dismayed" at the events.³³ But Gorbachev did not publicly condemn the actions of the Chinese government, nor did he heed Andrei Sakharov's proposal to recall the Soviet ambassador to China.³⁴ Instead of severing relations with China, the Soviet Union showed strong support for the Chinese regime by expanding its diplomatic representation in Beijing, upgrading the trade relationship, and establishing closer partnership with the Chinese Communist Party.³⁵ Gorbachev's refusal to reprimand China can be explained by his unwillingness to compromise the normalization of Sino-Soviet relations.³⁶ But based on the available evidence, Gorbachev did not think that a "Chinese scenario" could be applied in the context of the Soviet Union. Aside from moral compunctions and the need to safeguard his international reputation, Gorbachev understood that a "Chinese scenario" would not have been successful on a purely practical level. This became increasingly clear to him as the opposition gained strength in 1989–1991, and as his hold over the repressive apparatus weakened.

Contemplating a "Chinese Scenario"

In contrast, the leaders of the other Central and Eastern European states were intensely interested in applying the Chinese experience of dealing with "counterrevolutionary upheaval" to their own countries. They had small opposition movements and believed they held strong control over the repressive apparatus. As such, using repression to maintain stability initially seemed an attractive option to these regimes. Even as Western countries sternly reprimanded China in the wake of the Tiananmen massacre,³⁷ some

³² Gorbachev, *Zhizn' i reformy*, vol. 2, 451.

³³ "Turmoil in China; Kremlin Dismayed, Aide Says," *New York Times* (10 June 1989).

³⁴ Iu. M. Galenovich, *Protivostoianie: Pekin, Tiananmen, 1989 god* (Moscow: RAN, 1995), vol. 3, 75.

³⁵ See RGANI Fond 89 per. 21 d. 25 (1990); RGANI Fond 89 per. 8 d. 79 (1990). These measures followed the initial steps taken in the mid-1980s to extend and deepen Sino-Soviet cultural, diplomatic, and trade relations, as detailed in Titarenko, ed., 40 *let KNR*, 358–71.

³⁶ Palazchenko, *My Years with Gorbachev and Shevardnadze*, 137.

³⁷ Western countries put heavy pressure on China, including a downgrading of diplomatic relations, an arms sales embargo (by the United States and the Euro-

socialist states maintained active relations with China. For example, the Bulgarian leadership sent foreign minister Petar Mladenov on an official visit in October 1989.³⁸ High-level Chinese officials were also received in the GDR and in Romania.

This warm attitude is not surprising when we consider that the Chinese government presented the Tiananmen events to its partners in Central and Eastern Europe as a counterrevolutionary upheaval that threatened the very foundations of communist rule in China. The message was delivered to individual European governments by the Chinese ambassadors, who had been called to Beijing in July 1989 to be debriefed on the decisions of the Fourth Plenum of the Central Committee. A secret memorandum about a meeting between Bulgarian foreign minister Mladenov and Chinese ambassador Li Fenglin provides us with fascinating details on the main conclusions Deng drew about the causes of the Tiananmen events.³⁹ Deng focused on both the international macroclimate and the domestic microclimate. He argued that, as a result of China's opening up to the West and neglecting the importance of ideological differences with the West, the United States and its allies were able to use international organizations to prepare and directly participate in the upheaval.⁴⁰ According to "irrefutable evidence and information," the West perceived economic reform as evidence of the failure of the planned economy, and used this as an opportunity to interfere in Chinese internal affairs, instituting "peaceful evolution" from socialism and the gradual restoration of capitalism. But domestic factors mattered as well: bourgeois liberalization, weak patriotic education of the youth, corruption among the Party and state leadership, and unequal distribution of wealth produced divisions within Chinese society that were exploited by forces wishing to restore capitalism. The Chinese ambassador concluded by stating that, had it not been for divisions within the Politburo Standing Committee, the response to the upheaval could have been more "efficacious." However, Politburo members Zhao Ziyang and Hu Qili took an "unprincipled stand toward the introduction of martial law" and thus complicated the situation, leading to the loss of valuable time.

Mladenov thanked Ambassador Li and praised the Chinese leadership for drawing the correct conclusions from the situation. For Mladenov, the

pean Economic Community), and the freezing of loans and foreign direct investment. See Qian, *Ten Episodes in China's Diplomacy*, 127–57.

³⁸ Petar Mladenov, *Zhivotut: Plusove i minusi* (Sofia: Petex, 1992), 288–301, especially 299–301.

³⁹ "Memorandum Regarding the 27 July 1989 Meeting between Foreign Minister Mladenov and the Chinese Ambassador Li Fenglin" (secret), Central State Archive in Sofia (TsDA) f. 1B op. 101 a. e. 2156 (1989).

⁴⁰ This argument is also made in Li, *Liu Si Riji*.

lesson from China was clear: since similar problems existed in Bulgaria, a similar solution might be necessary. Other Central and Eastern European countries received an identical message from their respective Chinese ambassadors and felt the same need to closely study the Chinese solution. As Central and Eastern European states were dealing with many similar problems, they reacted to the events in China with both alarm and understanding of the Chinese position.

Ultimately, the Chinese option remained just talk for both Mladenov and the GDR's leader, Erich Honecker. In the face of rapidly escalating protests throughout the GDR in September and October 1989, Honecker made plans for resorting to a "Chinese solution," but ultimately was unable to implement them due to the absence of support from Gorbachev and from the Stasi.⁴¹ A similar pattern is observed in Czechoslovakia, where prime minister and hardliner Ladislav Adamec authorized measures to disperse small groups of protesters, but showed hesitation when he needed to unleash large-scale, Chinese-style violent repression against hundreds of thousands of protesters.⁴² More surprising was the case of Bulgaria, where the individual who pressed for a "Chinese solution" was in fact Mladenov, otherwise a self-professed reformist communist, who engineered a palace coup in November 1989 that led to Todor Zhivkov's ouster from power. Frustrated by his inability to convince a crowd of pro-democracy protesters to disperse, Mladenov said in public that it "might be better for the tanks to come."⁴³ In the end, however, no violence was used in Bulgaria. Ultimately, the non-use of force reflected an uncertainty among the leaders of

⁴¹ See Mark Kramer, "The Collapse of East European Communism and the Repercussions within the Soviet Union (part 2)," *Journal of Cold War Studies* 6, no. 4 (Fall 2004): 3–64, at 34n87; Mary Elise Sarotte, 1989: *The Struggle to Create Post-Cold War Europe* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009), 16–22. Also see Timur Kuran, "Now Out of Never: The Element of Surprise in the East European Revolution of 1989," *World Politics* 44, no. 1 (October 1991): 7–48; Susanne Lohmann, "The Dynamics of Informational Cascades: The Monday Demonstrations in Leipzig, East Germany, 1989–91," *World Politics* 47, no. 1 (October 1994): 42–101; Mary Elise Sarotte, *The Collapse: The Accidental Opening of the Berlin Wall* (New York: Basic Books, 2014).

⁴² On Czechoslovak plans to use massive repression against protesters, see Vilém Prečan and Derek Paton, eds., *The Democratic Revolution in Czechoslovakia: Its Precondition, Course, and Immediate Repercussions, 1987–89: Briefing Book* (Prague: Project on Openness in Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union, 1999); Oldřich Tůma, "Czechoslovak November 1989," *Cold War International History Project Bulletin*, nos. 12–13 (2001, special issue): 181–209.

⁴³ The protesters demanded changes to the constitution that would have legitimized opposition parties. See documentary footage in *Podmianata: Deseti*, dir. Plamen Petkov (2004).

Central and Eastern European states that the secret police and the army would back them up.

Using a Chinese Scenario

But two Eastern European leaders did use violence against demonstrators: Romania's Ceaușescu and Albania's Ramiz Alia. Romania and Albania had made the least progress toward economic and political reforms. They also had the weakest opposition movements in Eastern Europe.⁴⁴ This made Ceaușescu and Alia feel in control of the secret police and the armed forces. As leaders of countries that had been close allies of China, Ceaușescu and Alia followed the Tiananmen events intently, and decided to apply a "Chinese scenario" domestically.⁴⁵ But the use of violence against demonstrators in Timișoara in December 1989 and in Tirana throughout 1990 sped up systemic collapse, rather than shoring up the regime. Although there are certainly many reasons why the use of violence was unsuccessful, available documents indicate that the leaders of Romania and Albania grossly overestimated the amount of popular support they enjoyed, as well as the loyalty of the repressive apparatus.⁴⁶

The above cases shed light on two conditions that helped the Chinese regime successfully wield force in 1989: first, the leadership maintained tight control over the army and the state security apparatus; and second, State Security reports revealed that the actual level of support for the government, outside major cities with universities, was very high.⁴⁷ This high level of support is not surprising when we take into account that the first decade of reforms (1978–1989) had mainly benefited China's peasants, who had seen rapid improvements in their standards of living. Since China was eighty percent rural at the time, the government was therefore able to secure the support of the bulk of the population. Although the leadership sacrificed a great deal of legitimacy by using force in 1989, this legitimacy was only lost with some segments of the urban population; peasants were either unaffected by the Tiananmen events, or approved of the use of force

⁴⁴ Jiří Pehe, "An Annotated Survey of Independent Movements in Eastern Europe," *Radio Free Europe Research RAD Background Report* (Eastern Europe) 100 (June 13, 1989).

⁴⁵ Romania in particular expressed support for China, and was later rewarded with a visit by Chinese Politburo member Qiao Shi in November 1989.

⁴⁶ In the case of Romania at least, the secret police (*Securitate*) is suspected of having staged the December 1989 revolution in Bucharest. See Antonia Rados, *Die Verschwörung der Securitate: Rumäniens verratene Revolution* (Hamburg: Hoffmann und Kampe, 1990); Peter Siani-Davies, *The Romanian Revolution of December 1989* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005).

⁴⁷ Zhang, *The Tiananmen Papers*, 149.

to maintain order. In contrast, both rural residents and urban-dwellers were united in their dissatisfaction with the European communist regimes, which delivered weak economic performance. Therefore, trying to maintain order through the use of force in Central and Eastern Europe was impossible, due to the very low level of leadership legitimacy.

III. The Eastern European Impact on China

The events of 1989 were driven primarily by domestic concerns: students protested because they wanted the government to be responsive to their demands for an inclusive, consultative leadership style, whereas workers were alarmed by massive government corruption, inflation, and the prospect of rising unemployment after the restructuring of urban work units. However, as the protests of 1989 took place against a backdrop of momentous transformations in Europe, we must ask whether European events impacted, even indirectly, the events in China.

When discussing the impact of European events in China, we need to make a distinction between the protesters and the government. Primarily because they had more limited access to information, the protesters paid less attention to developments in Central and Eastern Europe than did the leadership. Another reason why European events impacted the leadership more than they did the protesters was temporal: the protesters were influenced only by the major transformations that had taken place by the beginning of June 1989 (by which point no communist regime had yet collapsed), whereas the leadership was impacted by events unfolding beyond June 1989.

The Protesters

The spring 1989 protests in Beijing were progressing at the same time as momentous changes were sweeping through Central and Eastern Europe. In February 1989, the Central Committee of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party had labeled the 1956 events a "popular uprising" and had endorsed the principle of multi-party democracy, thus undermining the party's hegemony.⁴⁸ In Poland, the Round Table Talks between the opposition and the government were held between February and April 1989, culminating with the decision to schedule the first competitive elections for June 1989.⁴⁹ In the

⁴⁸ Patrick H. O'Neil, "Revolution from Within: Institutional Analysis, Transitions from Authoritarianism, and the Case of Hungary," *World Politics* 48, no. 4 (July 1996): 579–603.

⁴⁹ Wiktor Osiatyński, "The Roundtable Talks in Poland," in *The Roundtable Talks and the Breakdown of Communism*, ed. Jon Elster (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 21–68.

Soviet Union, multi-candidate elections had been held in March and April 1989, with many prominent Communist Party candidates failing to get re-elected to the Congress of People's Deputies. Members of the Politburo and the Central Committee, as well as regional party chiefs, lost their seats to unendorsed candidates like dissident Andrei Sakharov and Boris Yeltsin, who had been purged by Gorbachev in 1987.⁵⁰ But protesters had little knowledge of, or interest in, these events, likely because they were not widely reported in the Chinese press.

The impact of European events was primarily indirect. One example is provided by a report made by Politburo member Chen Xitong to Deng Xiaoping that the students at Peking University were imitating Poland's Solidarity when they formed their own Solidarity Student Union.⁵¹ But the similarity between the two entities did not extend beyond their names: while the Polish Solidarity represented a true alliance of workers and intellectuals, united by the common goal of forcing the communist regime into concessions, Chinese students staunchly maintained their elitist stance of not wanting to form a Solidarity-style alliance with the workers.⁵²

There was one instance, however, when Eastern Europe had a direct impact on the events in Tiananmen: Gorbachev's visit. According to the memoirs of Gorbachev's translator Palazchenko, student protesters demanded a meeting with Gorbachev (which would doubtless have raised the stature of their movement), encouraging him to intervene on their behalf and to put pressure on the Chinese leadership. But Gorbachev decided to avoid actively encouraging the student movement. He did not agree to such a meeting, so as not to offend his hosts.⁵³ Once Gorbachev departed China on May 18, the impact of what happened in the eastern part of Europe on the protesters became even more negligible.

In sum, while oppositional activity in Central and Eastern Europe provided a moral example of courage in standing up to power, and even though Gorbachev's impending visit served as an impetus for the students' hunger strike, there is no evidence that the political developments in Central and Eastern Europe played a direct role in the Tiananmen events, whether through the press in these countries (which ignored the events prior to the crackdown), through explicit encouragement by the governments concerned, or by facilitating the linking up of Chinese protesters with dissident groups in Central and Eastern Europe. In contrast, we have abundant evidence that the West and Japan, as well as Hong Kong and to a

⁵⁰ Mary McAuley, *Soviet Politics 1917–1991* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 89–119.

⁵¹ Zhang, *The Tiananmen Papers*, 71.

⁵² Walder and Gong, "Workers in the Tiananmen Protests."

⁵³ Palazchenko, *My Years with Gorbachev and Shevardnadze*, 135–36.

lesser extent Taiwan, played a role in providing material and moral support to the protesters. The protesters were emboldened by the actions of US diplomats and by US media coverage, including *Voice of America* broadcasts transmitted in the square through loudspeakers, thus allowing workers and students to feel that the West stood behind them.⁵⁴ In addition, students eagerly followed the examples of Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr., as well as of protesters in South Korea, the Philippines, and Hong Kong, though not of Poland, despite fears among the leadership that the protesters might emulate Solidarity.⁵⁵

The Government

Much like the protesters, the top leadership closely followed Western media coverage. Unlike the protesters, who only had access to *Voice of America* broadcasts, the leadership received regular updates on coverage in the *Washington Post*, the *Los Angeles Times*, and the *New York Times*, as well as in the main Japanese and French media. Western criticism of China was insufficient to encourage the Chinese leadership to back down, and, if anything, made it more nervous and willing to look for a definitive solution to the problem, which in the eyes of Deng and Li involved the use of force to maintain order. In the aftermath of June 4, Western media expressed condemnation of the massacre and called for the imposition of sanctions, thus presenting an annoyance for the leadership. But while Western media served mostly in a gadfly role, Central and Eastern Europe presented a threatening scenario for the Chinese leadership: after all, European communist regimes shared many commonalities with China, and they were falling like dominoes.

Li Peng's diary reveals that the top leadership closely watched developments in Central and Eastern Europe. The diary mentions a March 4 conversation between Deng Xiaoping and Zhao Ziyang, during which Deng urged Zhao to maintain stability and avoid chaos. According to Li, these words reflected Deng's worry that China might follow the path of Poland and Hungary, both of which were experiencing social disorder by March 1989 because they had repudiated the leading role of the Communist Party and allowed for a multi-party system.⁵⁶ Further evidence of the Central and

⁵⁴ Zhang, *The Tiananmen Papers*; Li, *Liu Si Riji*.

⁵⁵ Merle Goldman, "The 1989 Demonstrations in Tiananmen Square and Beyond: Echoes of Gandhi," in *Civil Resistance and Power Politics: The Experience of Non-violent Action from Gandhi to the Present*, ed. Adam Roberts and Timothy Garton Ash (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 247–59. Compare also with Jeffrey Stout's chapter in this volume.

⁵⁶ Li Peng, *Li Si Riji*, entry for April 23, 1989. On the importance of Europe, see also M. E. Sarotte, "China's Fear of Contagion: Tiananmen Square and the Power of the European Example," *International Security* 37, no. 2 (Fall 2012): 156–82.

Eastern European impact on the Chinese leadership is that, upon hearing of the April 25 events in the square, Deng said that the students “have been influenced by the liberal elements of Yugoslavia, Poland, Hungary, and the Soviet Union.”⁵⁷ Although Deng evaluated the movement in China to be weaker than that in Poland, where both the Catholic Church and the labor unions opposed the government,⁵⁸ he nevertheless urged the leadership to be resolute and to avoid making concessions to the students, since “concessions in Poland led to further concessions.”⁵⁹ The Western press further heightened the anxiety of the leaders. Li Peng mentions that the *Washington Post* called for harsh treatment of China, similar to that previously applied to the communist leadership of Poland and Hungary.⁶⁰ This treatment eventually facilitated political liberalization in both countries, a fate that the Chinese leadership resolutely wanted to avoid.

Chinese anxiety about the events in Central and Eastern Europe grew during the summer and fall of 1989. The leadership received reports from its ambassadors about the eroding power of communist parties there.⁶¹ In addition, classified publications provided timely reports on popular protests and government resignations that took place in the region throughout the fall of 1989.⁶² As early as 1990, internal-circulation publications attempted to present a comprehensive picture of the changes that had occurred in six European countries, all of which had adopted a multi-party system and had organized competitive elections (Poland, Hungary, East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, and Romania). These publications contained strikingly accurate details about how declining economic performance, corruption, and ossified leadership bred popular discontent, which in turn emboldened liberal-minded members of the leadership to mount challenges against their own old guard.⁶³ Providing further analysis, internal reports in 1991 focused on how the abandonment of Marxism-Leninism, the introduction of a multi-party system, blind faith in democratic elections, unwillingness to

⁵⁷ Zhang, *The Tiananmen Papers*, 204.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 205–6; see also “A Document Circulated Among Senior Party and Government Officials Earlier this Month,” reproduced in *Beijing Spring, 1989: Confrontation and Conflict: The Basic Documents*, 203–6.

⁵⁹ Zhang, *The Tiananmen Papers*, 205.

⁶⁰ Li, *Liu Si Riji*.

⁶¹ See the record of the conversation between the Chinese ambassador to Sofia and the Bulgarian foreign minister on July 27, 1989 (TsDA f. 1B op. 101 a. e. 2156 [1989]).

⁶² See, for example, *Cankao yaowen* (Important Reference News) 622 (November 8, 1989) for reports on the resignation of the East German government, anti-government slogans at the November 7 manifestation in Moscow, and on the pro-reform orientations of liberals within the Bulgarian government.

⁶³ Yang Hua. *Dong'ou jubian jishi* (Beijing: Shijie Zhishi Chubanshe, 1990).

carry out Chinese-style reform and openness, failures of education, the poor management of intellectuals, economic problems, and, finally, internal party problems such as lax discipline, bureaucratism, corruption, and distancing from the masses, brought about regime collapse in Central and Eastern Europe.⁶⁴ The Chinese leadership watched with alarm as the ruling European communist parties were reduced to opposition status in 1990–1991.⁶⁵ Finally, the leadership was concerned by the fate of Honecker, Zhivkov, and Alia (not to mention Ceaușescu), all of whom were at one point or another indicted for crimes they committed while serving as general secretaries.⁶⁶

These postmortems of the collapse of communism in European countries presented the leadership with clear lessons about the conditions that could lead to regime breakdown in China. Some open-access academic writings in the early 1990s suggested that the Eastern European revolutions were justified, since people could no longer tolerate single-party dictatorship, authoritarian oppression over individualism, and the penury brought about by the inefficient planned economy.⁶⁷ The implication of this analysis was that, insofar as there existed parallels between the political and economic systems in Central and Eastern Europe and in China, a similar fate could befall the latter. However, as the internal non-academic publications make clear, the Chinese leadership engaged in active learning aimed at avoiding regime collapse. Learning from the collapse of communism became imperative once the Soviet Union itself had begun to unravel.

IV: The Impact of the Soviet Collapse on China

The lessons that China drew from the collapse of the Soviet Union were dynamic, changing over the course of the 1990s to reflect domestic political developments. We can distinguish two phases of Chinese learning from the Soviet collapse: before 1992 and after 1992. Prior to 1992, the Chinese leadership attributed the ongoing disintegration of the Soviet Union to Western influence, consequently believing that isolationism could prevent regime collapse in China. This was a time of major retrenchment away from the market in China. After 1992, when China welcomed Western investment and showed a firm commitment to the private economy, the Soviet collapse was attributed to Gorbachev's mistaken policies of allowing democratic de-

⁶⁴ *Neibu canyue* (Internal Reference) 11 (1991).

⁶⁵ *Neibu canyue* 57 (1991).

⁶⁶ *Neibu canyue* 23 (1993).

⁶⁷ Ma Shaohua. *Dong'ou 1989–1993* (Xi'an: Shaanxi Renmin Jiaoyu Chubanshe, 1993).

bate both within and outside the Party. This has remained China's dominant interpretation of the collapse of the Soviet Union until the present day.

The Chinese leadership paid close attention to the political situation in the Soviet Union before its collapse. Views of Gorbachev were critical, especially in the wake of Tiananmen. One marker of the unsympathetic attitude toward Gorbachev was that internal Chinese publications reported on the August 1991 coup, but neither condemned the coup plotters nor expressed concern for Gorbachev.⁶⁸ Prior to the Soviet collapse, internal government publications portrayed Gorbachev's political and economic policies as misguided. Economically, Gorbachev was criticized for his blind embrace of capitalism and uncritical acceptance of the "Harvard plan."⁶⁹ Politically, he was criticized for his failure to resist "peaceful evolution" (*heping yanbian*), a strategy of Western countries to subvert socialism from within through economic, cultural, and political means such as trade, promotion of Western lifestyles, and pressure on the communist world to protect human rights; for his promotion of a more humane democratic socialism (*minzhu shehuizhuyi*); and for his abandonment of the ideas of Marxism-Leninism and promotion of political pluralism that could only be brought about by a multi-party system.⁷⁰ Prior to the Soviet collapse, the Chinese leadership worried a great deal about how best to counteract peaceful evolution. Internal reports outlined two related strategies: one called for resisting bourgeois liberalization (Western political and economic ideas), whereas the other stressed the importance of maintaining the ideological purity of Marxism-Leninism.⁷¹ These deeply conservative strategies reflected China's own uncertainties about its commitment to the market and its incapacity to articulate an alternative ideology to Marxism-Leninism at a time when communist regimes were collapsing around the globe. Had these strategies of resisting peaceful evolution been followed, China today would more closely resemble North Korea: an economically, politically, and culturally isolated country with a deep distrust of the West.

As the Soviet Union collapsed at the end of 1991, Chinese assessments of perestroika changed. The main driver was domestic. In January and February 1992, Deng Xiaoping made his "Southern Tour," which re-established the importance of the market economy in China. Deng's com-

⁶⁸ See, for example, coverage in *Cankao xiaoxi* (Reference News) 11880 (August 20, 1991); 11881 (August 21, 1991); 11882 (August 22, 1991); 11883 (August 23, 1991); 11884 (August 24, 1991); 11885 (August 25, 1991); and 11886 (August 26, 1991).

⁶⁹ *Neibu canyue* 40 (1991).

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ *Neibu canyue* 29 (1991). See also Jialin Zhang, *China's Response to the Downfall of Communism in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 1994).

mitment to the market was officially enshrined into the guiding ideology at the XIV Party Congress in October 1992, when the Chinese Communist Party stated that it aimed to build a socialist market economy (*shehuizhuyi shichang jingji*).

As foreign investment was essential for developing the market economy, it was no longer politically feasible to blame peaceful evolution for the Soviet collapse. Furthermore, criticisms of Gorbachev as a blind follower of the market had to be muted in order to reflect China's own economic re-orientation. Emphasis was instead placed on Gorbachev's mistaken policies of splitting the Party and allowing for political liberalization. Since the early 1990s, Chinese explanations of the Soviet collapse have stressed the negative side effects of political reform. The clear implication for China is that it should not pursue a Gorbachev-style political reform.

In the 2000s, hundreds of books and articles were written on the Soviet collapse. However, the best reflection of the Chinese leadership's views is provided by the classified documentary *Ju'an siwei: Sugong wangdang de lishi jiaoshun* (Be Vigilant in Peacetime: The Historical Lessons of the Collapse of the Soviet Union). This four-hour-long, eight-part documentary was released in 2006 and represented the culmination of a major multi-year research project on "The Rise and Fall of the CPSU and the Soviet Union." The importance of the research was highlighted by the fact that it was supported by the National Science Foundation and by the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. A central argument of the documentary was that, even though a historical event of the magnitude of the Soviet collapse may have multiple and complex causes, there was nevertheless a single dominant reason for the collapse. That reason boiled down to internal problems within the CPSU (*wenti zai dangnei*). The documentary took a very critical stance toward Gorbachev, arguing that his policies brought about the downfall of the CPSU, and through that, the collapse of the Soviet Union. Specifically, Gorbachev was blamed for his wholesale rejection of basic precepts of Marxism-Leninism (democratic centralism, class struggle, collective ownership of the means of production) and for adopting Western ideals of freedom, democracy, human rights, a multi-party system, and privatization of state property as his guiding philosophy. By allowing criticism of the CPSU both from within (by factions) and from without (by the press, NGOs, and opposition parties), Gorbachev destroyed the belief of the people in the unity of the Party. Once that belief was shattered, the documentary posited, people were unwilling to come to the rescue of the Party as Western puppets like Gorbachev and Yeltsin set about to annihilate it. The demise of the CPSU consequently, and necessarily, brought about the demise of the Soviet state (*wangdang biran wangguo*).

The top leadership of the CCP used this conservative documentary to transmit a clear message to lower-level party cadres concerning the best

strategy for realizing the long-term goal of maintaining single-party rule in China. To ensure that cadres had access to the documentary, it was screened at party schools throughout China, and an edited version of the script was disseminated as a secret internal party document.⁷² The leadership was resolutely determined to avoid Soviet-style political reform. Its strategy for this was two-pronged, focusing on maintaining control both over the Party and over society by limiting the rise of alternative centers of power. The specific tactical measures involved a combination of carrots and sticks.

Thus, when it came to the Party, the leadership expressly wielded the stick of banning factions, but at the same time dangled the carrot of promoting inner-party democracy (*dangnei minzhu*), which involved internal party debate, multi-candidate elections and term limits for party posts, and enhanced supervision and greater transparency in party affairs.⁷³ Although the existence of factions is tacitly recognized in Chinese politics, the post-Tiananmen leadership has not allowed disagreements between members of different factions to be aired in public.⁷⁴ This stands in sharp contrast to the Soviet case, where factional conflict within the CPSU during perestroika was openly broadcast on television. According to the makers of the documentary, Gorbachev's public embarrassment by individuals like Yeltsin and Sakharov served to undermine the faith of the public in the unity of the Party.

In addition to banning factions within the CCP, the leadership has carefully avoided allowing any independent associational life outside the party. Although hundreds of thousands of NGOs exist in China, those that are independent and critical of the regime are quickly disbanded. Since 1989, independent political parties have also been strictly banned. Finally, the fate of Falun Gong reveals that the regime remains determined to eliminate potential challenges from religious organizations.⁷⁵ The successful implementation of these strategies has allowed the regime to prevent the rise of alternative sources of power.

⁷² Guihai Guan, "The Influence of the Collapse of the Soviet Union on China's Political Choices," in *China Learns from the Soviet Union, 1949–Present*, ed. Thomas P. Bernstein and Hua-yu Li (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2010), 505–15, at 507.

⁷³ Cheng Li, "Intra-Party Democracy in China: Should We Take It Seriously?" *China Leadership Monitor* 30 (2009).

⁷⁴ In the late 2000s, the strongest tensions existed between members of the "populist" faction (identified with President Hu Jintao) and the "princeling" faction, which was identified with Hu's successor Xi Jinping. Both factions agreed on the importance of economic growth, but the populists were more concerned with redistributive policies than the princelings.

⁷⁵ James W. Tong, *Revenge of the Forbidden City: The Suppression of the Falungong in China, 1999–2005* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

As it was the free media that exposed this factional conflict to the public in the Soviet Union, the lesson that China drew is that strict control over the press would help limit critical views from spreading. Independent-minded or critical news outlets and websites are shut down. That said, not all criticism is off-limits in China today: news media are allowed to expose corruption within the Party (and thus help increase transparency in party affairs), but their muckraking must not progress beyond low-level cadres, and cannot address corruption at the apex of power.⁷⁶ Criticism of the top leadership is, of course, stifled. Over the last two decades, Chinese media have become much more entertaining, since they have to turn a profit, but they have been far less willing to engage in criticism of the Party or of the political system.

To compensate for suppressing freedom of the press, NGOs, and political parties, the leadership has promoted letters and visits as a form of responsiveness to public demands. Although all communist regimes have a system of letters and visits that allows citizens to make demands to the party and government for the provision of services or for redressing of wrongs, the letters and visits (*xinfang*) system in China has a long history and has traditionally been understood as one of the pillars of regime legitimacy.⁷⁷ Since competitive elections exist only at the grassroots level, complaints through the letters and visits system function as the main vehicle for holding the Party accountable to the people in China today.⁷⁸ Although the system has so far served to bolster regime legitimacy and to generate some popular consent, the decreasing responsiveness of the leadership to citizen complaints indicates that regime stability in China may be in danger. This raises the question of how much longer citizens will willingly “accept authoritarianism” before they withdraw their contingent consent and engage in anti-regime protests.⁷⁹

⁷⁶ Benjamin Liebman, “Watchdog or Demagogue? The Media in the Chinese Legal System,” *Columbia Law Review* 105, no. 1 (January 2005): 1–157; Daniela Stockmann, *Media Commercialization and Authoritarian Rule in China* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013). My own evolving views on the strategic deployment of “investigative” journalism in China are reflected in Martin K. Dimitrov, “The Political Logic of Media Control in China,” *Problems of Post-Communism* 64, nos. 3–4 (2017): 121–27.

⁷⁷ Qiang Fang, *Chinese Complaint Systems: Natural Resistance* (New York: Routledge, 2013).

⁷⁸ Martin K. Dimitrov, “Vertical Accountability in Communist Regimes: The Role of Citizen Complaints in Bulgaria and China,” in Dimitrov, *Why Communism Did Not Collapse*, 276–302; Dimitrov, “Internal Government Assessments of the Quality of Governance in China,” *Studies in Comparative International Development* 50, no. 1 (2015): 50–72.

⁷⁹ Teresa Wright, *Accepting Authoritarianism: State-Society Relations in China’s Reform Era* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010).

One of the key lessons from the Soviet collapse was the importance of minority unrest to the disintegration of the Soviet Union. This insight has been affirmed by numerous academic writings,⁸⁰ and was repeatedly highlighted in the classified documentary discussed above. Following the Soviet collapse, the leadership changed its policies toward the Tibetans and the Uighurs—the two minorities that have the highest potential for secession, as they are religiously, linguistically, and culturally diverse from the rest of China. In the 1990s, the government sharply increased fiscal transfers to minority regions,⁸¹ engaging in a policy of “rational appeasement” of separatism.⁸² This increased spending was combined with restrictions on cultural freedom and severe repression of “splittist” pro-independence groups.⁸³ As attested by the Lhasa riots in 2008, the Xinjiang unrest in 2009, and more recent ethnic riots, these minority policies are insufficient for preventing massive anti-regime ethnic upheaval. Thus, both the malfunctioning letters and visits system and minorities are potential vectors for regime instability, of which the leadership is fully aware.⁸⁴ China’s continuous stability will depend on a careful balancing act, where the government manages to stifle discontent within the Party, prevents autonomous organizations from emerging outside the CCP, and keeps both the general public and minorities from rebelling. As China’s experience over the past several decades has shown, the essential ingredients for carrying this out are vigorous economic growth and a strong repressive capacity.

⁸⁰ Guan Guihai, “The Influence of the Collapse of the Soviet Union on China’s Political Choices.”

⁸¹ Minglang Zhou, “The Fate of the Soviet Model of Multinational State-Building in the People’s Republic of China,” in Bernstein and Li, *China Learns from the Soviet Union, 1949-Present*, 477–503; June Teufel Dreyer, “Economic Development in Tibet Under the People’s Republic of China,” in *Contemporary Tibet: Politics, Development and Society in a Disputed Region*, ed. Barry Sautman and June Teufel Dreyer (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 2006), 129–51.

⁸² This term has been used with reference to Russia: see Daniel Treisman, *After the Deluge: Regional Crises and Political Consolidation in Russia* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998).

⁸³ Gardner Bovingdon, *The Uyghurs: Strangers in Their Own Land* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010).

⁸⁴ See Zhonggong Zhongyang Zuzhibu Ketu Zu, *Zhongguo diaocha baogao 2000–2001: Xin xingshi xia renmin neibu maodun yanjiu* (Beijing: Zhongyang Bianyi Chubanshe, 2001).

V: The Impact of China on Russia

Over the past decade, Russia has carefully watched and tried to emulate the Chinese model. This is a radical departure from the Soviet attitudes toward China. During the Brezhnev era, when China eventually adopted a relatively flexible attitude regarding its ideological differences with the Soviet Union, the USSR firmly held onto its negative views of China due to the perceived deviations from socialism initiated by Mao and Deng.⁸⁵ The Soviet sinological community was fairly large,⁸⁶ but scholars usually focused on topics of humanistic or historical interest, rather than on tracking and analyzing recent developments in Chinese politics and, especially, in Chinese economics.⁸⁷ Only a handful of scholars broached these topics, and their scholarly objectivity was compromised by the need to criticize China for its ideologically heterodox economic reform policies.⁸⁸ Dominant understandings of China as a backward country prevented Soviet leaders from paying serious attention to the lessons they could draw from China's innovative approach to economic reform. Gorbachev, for example, was dismissive of China's reform efforts and ruled out Soviet borrowing from them.⁸⁹ Thus, despite the normalization of relations in 1989, Soviet views of China remained negative during the dissolution of the USSR.⁹⁰

⁸⁵ Gilbert Rozman, *The Chinese Debate about Soviet Socialism, 1978–1985* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987); Rozman, *A Mirror for Socialism: Soviet Criticisms of China* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985).

⁸⁶ Rozman reports that there were about a thousand China specialists in the Soviet Union as of 1982. See Rozman, *A Mirror for Socialism*, 49.

⁸⁷ See annotated bibliography of Russian-language research on China in M. L. Titarenko, ed. *Institut Dal'nego vostoka: Gody, liudi, trudy: Informatsionno-bibliograficheskii spravochnik* (Moscow: Pamiatniki Istoricheskoi Mysli, 2006).

⁸⁸ L. I. Molodtsova, *Osobennosti formirovaniia promyshlennoi sistemy KNR, 1949–1985* (Moscow: Nauka, 1988); V. G. Gel'bras, *Ekonomicheskaiia reforma v KNR: Ocherki, nabliudeniia, razmyshleniia* (Moscow: Mezhdunarodnye otnosheniia, 1990); E. P. Pivovarova, *Stroitel'stvo sotsializma s kitaiskoi spetsifikoi: Poisk puti* (Moscow: Nauka, 1992). For a magisterial analysis of the politics of analyzing China in the pre-perestroika Soviet Union, see Rozman, *The Chinese Debate about Soviet Socialism*.

⁸⁹ Gorbachev, *Zhizn' i reformy*, 449–51. For a different view, see Chris Miller, *The Struggle to Save the Soviet Economy: Mikhail Gorbachev and the Collapse of the USSR* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2016).

⁹⁰ There were, of course, some voices calling for cooperation with China in the 1990s, but their views did not receive wide exposure beyond the narrow confines of academic Sinology. See, for example, the essays collected in Vladimir Portyakov, *The People's Republic of China: Economic Policy of the 1990s* (Moscow: Russian Academy of Sciences, 1999). The print run of this book was 100 copies.

Negative perceptions of China persisted in the post-Soviet period, primarily for political reasons: Russia was striving to build democracy, whereas China remained an authoritarian regime. Although the two countries exchanged top-level visits and founded the Shanghai Cooperation Organization in 1996, Russia continued to view China as a threat (*ugroza*) throughout the 1990s. Taking their cue from the politicians, Russian sinologists similarly focused on the “Chinese threat,” which was studied along the economic, demographic, and strategic dimensions of the bilateral relationship.⁹¹

The great turn in relations between China and Russia occurred after Vladimir Putin’s ascent to power. While in the 1990s those who might praise China were seen as anti-democratic, pro-communist sympathizers, the new political climate of the 2000s not only encouraged scholarly forays into serious comparative analysis of the similarities and differences between the Russian and Chinese development models,⁹² but also allowed Russian leaders to officially start promoting the idea of learning from China. In October 2009, Putin dispatched a United Russia delegation to the Chinese border town Suifenhe, where a meeting with high-level CCP cadres was held. United Russia wanted to learn from the CCP, which had not only successfully weathered the most recent economic downturn, but had also proven remarkably resilient to various domestic and international political challenges.⁹³ This recognition and interest in the Chinese model is understandable: China is an attractive example of a non-democratic regime that enjoys some genuine popularity as a result of its successful deployment of economic growth policies and skillful manipulation of nationalism. This is especially relevant for Putin and Medvedev, who are actively searching for a formula that will ensure the long-term resilience of their authoritarian rule.

Perhaps one of the most interesting lessons of 1989 relates to the conditions that are conducive to learning across authoritarian regimes. Russia’s interest in learning from China suggests that there may be a type of “authoritarian affinity,” where the path of a successful, stable authoritarian regime is copied by other authoritarian regimes wishing to maintain their own stability. This type of copying is especially likely in times when the normative appeal of Western-style liberal democracy is declining, as evi-

⁹¹ I. A. Malevich, *Vnimanie Kitai* (Minsk: Harvest, 2000); V. G. Gel’bras, *Kitaiskaiia real’nost Rossii* (Moscow: Muravei, 2001); Dmitri Trenin, *Russia’s China Problem* (Moscow: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1999).

⁹² L. V. Nikiforov, T. E. Kuznetsova, and M. B. Guseva, *Kitai i Rossiia: Obshchee i osobennoe v sotsial’no-ekonomicheskoi razvitiu* (Moscow: Nauka, 2005).

⁹³ Clifford Levy, “Russia’s Leaders See China as Template for Ruling,” *New York Times* (October 18, 2009).

denced by the ongoing retrenchment in the number of democracies around the world beginning in the 2000s that has persisted since then.⁹⁴

VI. Conclusion

This chapter has presented an argument about the ability of authoritarian regimes to learn both from cases of authoritarian collapse and from examples of authoritarian resilience. In these concluding paragraphs, I would like to discuss briefly how geography, culture, ideology, and regime type might create barriers to diffusion. In classic theories of diffusion, all of these variables are understood to present obstacles to learning. However, the evidence presented in this essay argues that the actual effect of these variables may be different from that hypothesized in the theoretical literature.

Existing studies have argued that diffusion is geographically limited to certain regions. In terms of the collapse of communism, the region was understood as Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union; China is explicitly excluded from discussions of the diffusion of communist collapse. This essay has argued that, although geography seems to have presented a barrier for Central and Eastern European opposition groups learning from China, it did not prevent China from learning from Central and Eastern Europe. Similarly, geography has not been a significant constraint for Russian learning from China in the 2000s.

Culture is also often assumed to serve as an obstacle to diffusion and learning. Unquestionably, cultural reference points oriented Central and Eastern European publics toward learning from European countries, rather than from China. Similarly, Chinese protesters were interested in the experience of other Asian countries, rather than in the protest activities of Central and Eastern European publics. But the leaders of certain Central or Eastern European states did not rule out studying the experience of China because of cultural differences. Similarly, Chinese leaders paid close attention to Central and Eastern Europe.

Ideology does seem to present an obstacle to learning. However, this obstacle is one-sided: democratizing states (like Poland, Hungary, and the Soviet Union in June 1989) do not learn from autocracies, but autocracies learn from democratizing states and from other autocracies. As such, both ideological attitudes and regime type may jointly impact the propensity of countries to learn from each other.

⁹⁴ Freedom House, *Freedom in the World 2010* (Washington, DC: Freedom House, 2010); Freedom House, *Freedom in the World 2018* (Washington, DC: Freedom House, 2018).

This essay has used learning as a way to approach the question of the long 1989. The antecedents of 1989 can be located earlier in the 1980s, in both the cases of Central and Eastern Europe and of China. Moreover, the consequences of 1989 continue to shape the politics of both Central and Eastern Europe and China to the present day. Thus, studying the long 1989 allows us to shed some light on the mechanisms of both rapid and gradual institutional change in the communist and post-communist worlds.

PART TWO:
IDEAS AND IDEOLOGIES

CHAPTER 4

Dialogical Democracy: King, Michnik, and the American Culture Wars

Jeffrey Stout

Dialogical democracy is a form of political life in which both secular and religious people can participate together, without adopting either secularism or a religious outlook as fundamental. Its basis is not a particular outlook, secular or religious, but rather a widely shared willingness to forgo the advantages of domination in exchange for the advantages of mutual recognition, trust, respect, and accountability. The struggles against racial segregation in the United States and against Soviet domination in Poland prove that the ideal of democratic dialogue can, under certain conditions, be embodied in political practices that have beneficial effects on a large scale.

Adam Michnik was in his mid-teens when he organized the Club of the Seekers of Contradictions, a reading group for young Polish dissidents. It was in this setting that he first encountered the early writings of Martin Luther King, Jr., who was not merely an eloquent critic of domination, but also an activist seeking large-scale reform. The Civil Rights Movement provided Michnik and his friends with a model of cooperative democratic action. Michnik has recently said that King's writings would likely have been banned in Poland had their influence on dissidents been clear to communist officials.¹

It is well known that Michnik borrowed his conception of nonviolent resistance from King and Gandhi;² less well known is Michnik's appropri-

¹ Personal conversation with the author, April 2007. For a latter-day analogue, consider the role of Gene Sharp's *From Dictatorship to Democracy* in the Arab Spring. This handbook for dissolving dictatorships realistically and democratically was originally published in Bangkok in 1993 by the Committee for the Restoration of Democracy in Burma. Sharp made several references to the then-recent case of Poland. The book has since been translated into more than thirty languages. The fourth US edition is published in Boston by the Albert Einstein Institution. Earlier analogues include the role of Gandhi's writings in the Civil Rights Movement and the role of Emerson's writings in Abolitionism.

² Adam Michnik, "Letter from the Gdańsk Prison, 1985," in *Letters from Prison and Other Essays*, trans. Maya Latynski (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 76–100, at 88f.

tion of King's claim that democracy is essentially dialogical.³ In the decade or so leading up to 1989, Michnik used the ideal of dialogical democracy to define the core commitments of Solidarity, to secure cooperation between the movement's Catholic and secular wings, and to project a future for Poland that would be neither secularist nor theocratic.⁴ In section one of this chapter, I explain what the ideal entails, according to King and Michnik, regarding the ends and means of their respective movements. In section two, I examine Michnik's contrast between dialogical democracy and its two principal competitors in contemporary Poland: a secularist politics grounded in socialism, on the one hand, and a theocratic politics grounded in Catholic doctrine, on the other.

In section three, I adapt these contrasts to recent American debates over the relation of religion to politics. In the decade after King's assassination in 1968, the era of civil rights gave way to a period of conflict over the relation of religion to politics. I illustrate the transition by considering Rev. Richard John Neuhaus, who began his public career as a civil rights activist with close ties to King, later becoming a leading intellectual in the New Religious Right. In 1989, Neuhaus founded *First Things*, that movement's most influential journal of opinion. Between 1975 and his death in 2009, he described secularization as a growing threat to American democracy and developed a cultural program for addressing the problem.

As a matter of empirical fact, according to Neuhaus, American democracy depends for its health and survival on Judeo-Christian religion. If that religion deteriorates, the ethos of American democracy will collapse. Because Judeo-Christian religion is internally divided, culturally conservative Protestants, Catholics, and Jews need to engage in dialogue with one another, with the aim of joining forces politically. The values held in common by these groups require both political defense and governmental protection.

³ Stephen L. Esquith briefly discusses Michnik's conception of dialogue in "Political Dialogue and Political Virtue," which serves as the introduction to *Political Dialogue: Theories and Practices*, ed. Stephen L. Esquith (Amsterdam: Editions Rodopi, 1996), 9–22. Esquith refers to dialogue as "education in power," and emphasizes the role of "radical poise" in democratic dialogue. His piece does not mention the King connection.

⁴ A more thorough comparison of Michnik and King would have to consider their respective later writings on political economy and war. It seems to me that King's increasingly radical doubts about capitalism and American militarism were not only well taken, but also entailed by his democratic critique of domination. See Martin Luther King Jr., *The Radical King*, ed. Cornel West (Boston: Beacon Press, 2015), especially chapters 18 and 20, and West's introduction. While I suspect that Michnik's views on Polish economic development in the 1990s and on the War in Iraq were at odds with King's commitments, I shall not be able to examine this tension here.

Liberal secularism is an increasingly dominant “culture death,” which attacks genuinely democratic values from without, while corrupting religious communities from within. Dialogue is good within suitable limits, but it should not keep cultural conservatives from denouncing democracy’s actual enemies. Secularism has gained control of universities, the arts, journalism, and government, but it has also infiltrated religious communities. It must be fought on all fronts if democracy is to be saved.

This argument proposes a strategy for safeguarding democracy. Initially, the argument assumes that American democracy is worthy of protection. Neuhaus was neither questioning the legitimacy of the US Constitution, nor contemplating cancellation of the First Amendment. He did hold, however, that secularism had fostered misinterpretation of the First Amendment’s prohibition of an established religion. The American Founders differed from their British cousins on the relations of church and magistrate, but not on the need for religion (of the right kind) as a cultural basis for politics. Secularism undermines this cultural basis, in part by confusing a question of institutional differentiation with a question of moral formation. The Founders addressed the former question in a way that implicitly shifted the burden of moral formation to multiple religious communities outside of governmental control. This move is obviously not theocratic, for it prevents any single religious group from claiming the right to rule; nevertheless, the First Amendment does not prevent elected officials from using governmental power to foster the moral health of the citizenry. In the late twentieth century, according to Neuhaus, Judeo-Christian religion was in need of prudent, limited governmental help. The reasons for providing this help are democratic, not theocratic. Because a wide array of religious communities will benefit from the help, no violation of the First Amendment is entailed. Any religious community qualifies for support if it contributes appropriately to the moral formation of democratic citizens, a matter to be decided by democratically elected representatives of the people, as constrained by courts freed from secularist assumptions.

Early on, the New Religious Right had a theocratic strand, but not an especially vocal one. Yet because the movement’s recommended safeguards came so close to theocracy in practice as to be easily conflated with it, the line between theocracy and democracy was blurred. Neuhaus’s argument could be adapted to overtly theocratic purposes by reinterpreting the cultural divisions he posited more dualistically. The greater the fears of liberal contagion, the sharper the battle lines became. Many citizens who had been regarded during the civil rights era as worthy dialogue partners were now charged with wittingly or unwittingly undermining democratic culture. The prospects for an inclusive, respectful, democratic dialogue between cultural conservatives and *other* groups dimmed. Finally, during the presidency of

Barack Obama, theocratic ethnonationalism made an open bid for leadership of the Religious Right. *Breitbart* replaced *First Things* as the movement's journalistic beacon, and a self-consciously anti-dialogical candidate, imitating the very Eastern European models Michnik had criticized, won the US presidency. In section four, I ask whether King's legacy has a future under such circumstances.

1. The Nature and Importance of Dialogical Politics

King invoked the ideal of dialogue in his first book, *Stride toward Freedom* (1958).⁵ A few years later, in April 1963, he sat in a jail in Birmingham, Alabama, writing an open letter in response to eight white clergymen who had questioned the tactics of civil disobedience that had led to his arrest. It was the duty of each citizen, King held, to disobey unjust laws: first, in order to remove oneself from complicity in the injustices inflicted by those laws; and second, in order to press for reform. Acts of disobedience qualify as civil, in King's view, only if they eschew violence, demonstrate one's willingness to accept punishment as a form of sacrifice for the common good, and appeal to the conscience of one's fellow citizens dialogically. King intended his letter to be precisely such an appeal. "Too long has our beloved Southland been bogged down in a tragic effort to live in monologue rather than dialogue," King wrote.⁶

In 1985, while sitting in a prison in Gdańsk, Michnik wrote an open letter of his own, expressing hope that the "continuing conflict" in Poland would "transform itself into . . . a dialogue."⁷ He, too, had committed himself to seeking social change nonviolently, to making a sacrifice for the common good, and to appealing to both his friends and foes dialogically. It is one thing to try, as King did, to reform a republic constitutionally committed to separation of powers, free elections, free speech, and free association; it is quite another to attempt to transform a Soviet satellite state into a democratic republic. Michnik's acts of disobedience rejected the communist state's authority to rule. Those acts did, however, look forward to the constitution of a republic in which all members of Polish society, including those once complicit in Soviet domination, would be counted as citizens. Michnik addressed his communist oppressors, members of the Catholic

⁵ Martin Luther King, Jr., *Stride toward Freedom: the Montgomery Story* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2010), 208; originally published in 1958.

⁶ Martin Luther King, Jr., "Letter from Birmingham City Jail," in *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings*, ed. James M. Washington (San Francisco: Harper-Collins, 1986), 289–302, at 292.

⁷ Michnik, "Letter from the Gdańsk Prison," 95.

Church, and his fellow secular leftists as potential participants in a dialogue concerning the exercise and distribution of power in a new Poland.

In the middle third of the twentieth century, “dialogue” was in vogue among European and American intellectuals, many of whom cited Martin Buber, Gabriel Marcel, and Jacques Maritain as authorities on the virtues of living dialogically. Dialogue, according to these thinkers, involves addressing other human beings as *persons* rather than treating them as *things*. The philosophers and theologians of dialogue all opposed Nazi and communist forms of totalitarianism, for these were obviously ways of treating some human beings as mere things to be used, rather than as actual or potential partners in a respectful discussion of power and its proper exercise. Beyond this, however, the concrete implications of a commitment to dialogue—with respect to organizing, strategy, and positive objectives—were mostly left unclear.

King appears to have learned something about personalism as an undergraduate at Morehouse College and as a ministerial student at Crozier Theological Seminary. He worked directly with two prominent American personalists, Edgar S. Brightman and L. Harold DeWolf, while earning his doctorate at Boston University.⁸ In an essay published in *The Christian Century* in 1957, he wrote, “Throughout the era of slavery the Negro was treated in inhuman fashion. He was considered a thing to be used, not a person to be respected.” In 1962, in a speech delivered in Nashville, Tennessee, King spoke at length on “the sacredness of human personality,” arguing that white supremacy and racial segregation in the United States “depersonalize” blacks. The speech includes a passage on Buber’s distinction between I–It and I–Thou relationships, as did his “Letter from Birmingham City Jail.”⁹

While the rhetoric of dialogue in King’s writings is somewhat vague, he made clear that he was not merely arguing for *nonviolent* political engagement. Dialogical democracy entailed treating all citizens of goodwill as worthy of political friendship. It meant striving for a political community in

⁸ Rufus Burrow, Jr., *Personalism: A Critical Introduction* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 1999), 218–19. See also Warren E. Steinkraus, “Martin Luther King’s Personalism,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 34 (January–March 1973): 97–111. For a broader account of King’s intellectual formation, see John J. Ansbro, *Martin Luther King, Jr.: The Making of a Mind* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1982).

⁹ For the 1957 essay, see Martin Luther King, Jr., “Nonviolence and Racial Justice,” in *A Testament of Hope*, 5–8; the quoted passage appears on 5. For the 1962 speech, see Martin Luther King, Jr., “The Ethical Demands for Integration,” in *A Testament of Hope*, 117–25. King also refers to depersonalization in *The Strength to Love* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010), 6. *Strength* was originally published in 1963. For the reference to Buber, see King, “Letter from Birmingham City Jail,” 293.

which all citizens, including those currently complicit in oppression, would be reconciled in peace and justice. One's current opponents, no less than one's allies, were to be addressed as potential partners in a dialogue concerning differentials of power. This is a more rigorous constraint on means than mere avoidance of violence, and it pertains to the goal, as well as the means, of the struggle. For King, the struggle against racial domination looks forward to the possibility of repentance, forgiveness, and reconciliation.

Michnik's first book, *Kościół, Lewica, Dialog*—translated into English as *The Church and the Left*—does not mention King, but the conception of political dialogue developed in the book is entirely in line with King's vision.¹⁰ Michnik called for a dialogue between the secular Left and Polish Catholicism, not merely for the tactical purpose of building a coalition to contest Soviet domination, but for the ethical purpose of responding appropriately to other members of society. "When I speak of 'dialogue' with Christianity I am not speaking of intellectual swordsmanship or a tactical play for power," Michnik wrote. "I am speaking of basic human values. The Polish dialogue between the secular Left and Christianity must be based on union in antitotalitarian resistance"¹¹—ideally, in opposition to domination as such. A merely tactical approach to coalition-building would treat one's coalition partners as mere means, rather than as human beings entitled to a charitable hearing and to a role, if they desire it, in the struggle against domination: "We should, in the name of a proper dialogue, display maximum goodwill and try to comprehend what we can."¹²

Those who *already* exhibit goodwill are to be treated immediately as allies in the struggle against domination. By engaging in democratic dialogue

¹⁰ The Polish original appeared in exile in Paris in 1977: Adam Michnik, *Kościół, Lewica, Dialog* (Paris: Instytut Literacki, 1977). I shall be referring to the English translation: Adam Michnik, *The Church and the Left*, trans. David Ost (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993). A more proximate source of inspiration for Michnik's book is Bohdan Cywiński's historical study of the emergence of dialogue between Catholic and socialist thinkers in the Polish *fin-de-siècle*: see Bohdan Cywiński, *Rodowody niepokornych* (Warsaw: Biblioteka WIEŻY, 1971). For Michnik's explicit references to Cywiński, see Michnik, *The Church and the Left*, 131–33, 136, 146, 208–12. The most important of these cites Cywiński, a Catholic historian, as an example to be taken seriously by the secular Left: "I could not counterpose [his book] with a single work, a single article, in which a leftist intellectual had written about Christianity and the Church with [such] honesty, sincerity, and goodwill. . . . [It] presents us with a special responsibility: to bear witness ourselves." (Michnik, *The Church and the Left*, 209)

¹¹ Michnik, *The Church and the Left*, 192. For a transnational genealogy of these Polish debates, see Piotr H. Kosicki, *Catholics on the Barricades: Poland, France, and "Revolution," 1891–1956* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2018).

¹² Michnik, *The Church and the Left*, 194.

with the friends of freedom, you exhibit trust that your allies in the struggle will share in the risks of participating in it and reciprocate your acknowledgement of their authority to make claims, offer reasons, and express concerns pertaining to public things. If you take risks for the cause of freedom, as King did, you display yourself to your allies as committed to acting on behalf of the struggle you and they share, even when that means sacrificing something else of importance to you—in extreme cases, your freedom of movement, your bodily integrity, or even your life. You thereby invite your allies to make similar sacrifices on behalf of something held in common.¹³ By speaking to your allies and listening to them in a dialogical spirit, you ascribe to them a responsibility to hear you out and acknowledge their authority to address their claims, reasons, and concerns to you. You count their points of view as worthy of being taken into account in your reasoning. You recognize yourself and these others as bound together in a relationship where each has the authority to hold the other responsible for what they say and do, or neglect to say and do. Aristotle's name for this activity is *suggnomê*, or "judging with."¹⁴

Dialogue, as Michnik understands it, is also an exercise in building trust among the *potential* friends of freedom. Your sacrifice, by making manifest your trustworthiness as a potential friend, invites others, who have been reluctant to join the struggle, to treat you as a possible ally.¹⁵ You display yourself to others as someone who can be trusted to reciprocate trust, as someone who is more committed to liberty and justice for all than to jealous protection of your own interests, narrowly conceived. The greater the manifest sacrifice, the harder it will be for others to explain away your actions as selfish grabs for power. By making the sacrifice, you also treat those not yet engaged in the struggle as capable of being moved by appeals to conscience.

A related way of building up goodwill among one's interlocutors is to espouse and abide by principles. By declaring one's commitment to a principle, one commits oneself here and now to behaving in a certain way over the long haul. Because the commitment, if kept, will constrain the speaker's behavior in the future, possibly at some cost to his or her private interests, abiding by the commitment tends to generate trust.¹⁶ Making the commit-

¹³ On the theme of sacrifice, see Danielle S. Allen, *Talking to Strangers: Anxieties of Citizenship since Brown v. Board of Education* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), especially chapter 4, and Beth Eddy, *The Rites of Identity: The Religious Naturalism and Cultural Criticism of Kenneth Burke and Ralph Ellison* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), especially chapters 3 and 6.

¹⁴ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 6.11.1, as translated in Allen, *Talking to Strangers*, 154.

¹⁵ Allen, *Talking to Strangers*, 154f.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 146f. See Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, 2.21.14.

ment by enunciating a principle exposes speakers to the charge of hypocrisy if they someday fail to abide by it. Avowing a principle thus increases the social costs of failing to make whatever future sacrifices might be demanded by it.

It seems to me that this is why Michnik committed himself to avoiding violent means in the struggle against Soviet domination, despite disagreeing with the claim that any resort to violent force is always intrinsically immoral. By committing himself to a relatively narrow restriction, Michnik was eliciting the trust of actual and potential allies and promising future sacrifice on behalf of a dialogical politics. If I am reading him correctly on this point, his commitment to the latter played a more basic role in his thinking than his commitment to nonviolent resistance. He eschewed violent means in order to place the struggle on dialogical ground.

Speaking of genuinely democratic politics as dialogical is a way of contrasting the discursive practices of mutual recognition that are characteristic of a free society with one or another form of domination.¹⁷ While Michnik did not say so explicitly, the sense of freedom at issue here is *security* against domination.¹⁸ Let us say that to *dominate* others is either to exercise power

¹⁷ "Gandhi and King died for the same cause as the miners in Wujek who rejected the belief that it is better to remain a willing slave than to become a victim of murder." Michnik, "Letter from the Gdańsk Prison," 89. Here slavery functions as a paradigmatic form of domination. The British Raj, American racial segregation, and Soviet subjugation of Poland are all held to be intolerable, because they resemble slavery in morally relevant respects.

¹⁸ I contrast this conception of freedom with *freedom as noninterference* in Jeffrey Stout, *Blessed Are the Organized: Grassroots Democracy in America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010). My explications of freedom and domination are indebted to Philip Pettit, *Republicanism: A Theory of Freedom and Government* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), part one. Had Michnik been clearer about the difference between freedom as security from domination and freedom as noninterference, he may have been more wary of neoliberal economic and military alliances than he proved to be in the years after 1989—an important shortcoming but one too loosely connected with his thinking about religion to discuss in detail here. Neoliberalism portrays progressive taxation, governmental regulation of corporate conduct, constitutional constraints on military power, and legal constraints on racial discrimination and sexual harassment as *prima facie* violations of liberty, because of their tendency to restrict someone's conduct. The core commitment of dialogical democracy, as I interpret it, is inclusive security against domination. Such security is a good achievable only in a polity that *restricts* what individuals, corporations, and public officials may do. What counts as a *prima facie* violation of liberty, for the consistent dialogical democrat, is any power differential that leaves one person or group at another's mercy, not restriction or interference as such. For dialogical democrats, liberty must not be confused with license.

arbitrarily over them, or to be in a position to do so. An exercise of power is arbitrary if it is not appropriately constrained by the *considerations* a just decision maker would take into account. But decision makers are *in a position* to exercise power arbitrarily whenever they are not duly constrained by practices of influence and contestation. Democracy is ideally a practice of establishing, administering, and revising public arrangements so as to provide all members of society with security against domination. Such security can be achieved only in a just constitutional order—a set of offices and norms that provides due means for influencing, contesting, and holding accountable the decision-making of elites. Decisions made under these institutional constraints are presumed to be less prone than they would otherwise be to disregard the lives, concerns, and wellbeing of ordinary people.

The democratic promise of freedom, in the sense of inclusive non-domination, is hollow unless *the legal prohibition* of particular forms of conduct—such as torture, bribery, censorship, suppression of dissent, arbitrary arrest, unaccountable police violence, routine surveillance of ordinary citizens, abuse of public office, and military usurpation of civilian government—is itself backed with a morally and legally constrained use of coercive force. The issue of nonviolence is, accordingly, more complicated than it might initially appear. Michnik's commitment to nonviolence as a dissident in the People's Republic of Poland before 1989, or as a citizen of the Third Republic thereafter, is meant to place a principled constraint on the behavior of individuals occupying certain roles in the political culture. He is not claiming that nonviolence is required of everyone, regardless of one's role and circumstances. In a democratic republic, the political process can be conducted freely only if the constitution constrains citizens from dominating others, and only if citizens stand ready to defend their country justly and prudently, by violent means if necessary, from foreign aggressors.

When the members of a society address one another dialogically on political matters, they treat one another as entitled to exercise a full share of responsibility for public arrangements. They treat one another, in other words, as *citizens*, or as *if they were citizens*, rather than as mere subjects of someone's rule.¹⁹ "We all share responsibility," Michnik wrote.²⁰ This was so, he thought, even before the communists were overthrown and the rights of citizens were recognized in the new constitution. Even the victims of totalitarian oppression have a share of responsibility for the conditions un-

¹⁹ As Stephen Kotkin writes, "Poland *had* an opposition, which *imagined itself* as civil society." Stephen Kotkin with Jan T. Gross, *Uncivil Society: 1989 and the Implosion of the Communist Establishment* (New York: Modern Library, 2009), xiv. Italics in the original.

²⁰ Michnik, *The Church and the Left*, 212.

der which they are living, because all oppression depends to some extent on the deference of the dominated. If Poles outside the communist establishment “do not circulate our carbon-copy book manuscripts, if we do not publish in uncensored émigré publications, if we are silent in the face of persecution, injustice, and the lies of official propaganda, then it is not the authorities who are responsible for this, but we ourselves.”²¹

A democratic constitution, then, does not change who is *actually* responsible for public arrangements; rather, it changes who is *legally recognized* as responsible. It thus opens up public space within which those who are appropriately held responsible for public arrangements can exercise this responsibility without being threatened, jailed, fined, tortured, or killed for doing so. To exercise responsibility of this sort is to influence governmental decisions—and, when necessary, to contest them—while also holding oneself and one’s fellow citizens accountable for public arrangements as they are and have been. In a democratic polity, public speech is a primary vehicle for the exercise of such responsibility. Such speech is dialogical insofar as it acknowledges, at least implicitly, that each member of society is entitled, within sensible limits, to address the rest from his or her own point of view.

An unwillingness to reciprocate acknowledgment in this way typically expresses a desire to dominate at least some others. A dialogical politics strives to express, in one’s manner of public address and action, a commitment to inclusive non-domination. It thereby also strives to achieve a kind of political friendship among people of goodwill who differ in point of view. A person has goodwill, in the relevant sense, only if she or he is *not* disposed to dominate. More positively, someone expresses goodwill by acknowledging that other members of society are entitled to speak and act politically according to their own beliefs, concerns, and ends. Public discourse is dialogical to the extent that members of society reciprocate such acknowledgment.

King was fighting a regime of legalized racial segregation and an ethos of white supremacy in the United States. Michnik was fighting Soviet-controlled communist rule in Poland. In principle, though not always in practice, both men opposed domination as such. They inferred from their principles that the struggle against any particular form of domination must itself eschew any means or ends expressive of the will to dominate. If one form of domination is to be opposed *because* it is a form of domination, the organizations and tactics of the struggle must express and foster a commitment to reciprocal recognition among all who have an interest in not being dominated. Moreover, the overall objective of the struggle must not be to replace one form of domination with another, but rather to achieve a

²¹ Ibid., 212–13.

society whose members are all secure against all forms of domination. The goal of the struggle is not to install a new group in the dominant position.

Historically, the most common political strategy has been *to dominate* in order to *avoid being dominated*. In contemporary ethnonationalism, whites seek to subjugate non-whites, issuing a claim of racial superiority while also seeking to avoid landing in a subordinate position. The strategy becomes theocratic when the group seeking to preserve its dominant position identifies itself religiously, as well as ethnically or racially, and defends its claim to superiority partly in theological terms. In contrast, dialogical democracy aspires to rid society of domination to the fullest extent possible. The ideal is demanding, not only because domination comes in many forms, but also because some of them are hard to discern, above all by the people entangled in them. King and Michnik were aware that the stringency of the ideal they espoused would inevitably expose *them* to charges of hypocrisy and inconsistency. That some of those charges are surely correct does not impugn the ideal itself. If I were asked which civil rights activists most fully embodied the ideal of dialogical democracy, I would rank Ella Baker, Septima Clark, and Myles Horton above King. Baker's worries about King's patriarchal leadership style presupposed the ideal and extended its application wisely. Dialogical democracy's most eloquent defenders and its most admirable exemplars are not necessarily the same people. Neither King nor Michnik can claim immunity from the critical implications of the ideal they espoused.

2. Secular, Not Secularist

Central to Michnik's politics is a distinction between the idea of a *secular pluralistic* society of mutual recognition and the reality of a *secularist* society dominated by Marxist materialism. He supports the former and opposes the latter: "Catholics are due the same rights as other citizens, whether Protestants, Muslims, or atheists. From the standpoint of state law, religious conviction should be a purely private matter."²² Michnik goes on, however, to insist that all citizens ought to be free to express their deepest convictions when addressing political issues, whether those convictions are religious or not:

According to Communist propaganda, the "privacy" of religion hinges on a complete separation of religious values from political realities and on the Church's total abdication from involvement in the political sphere. Surely such an understanding of the "privacy" of religion, such a "separation" of church and

²² Ibid., 139.

state, the secular Left should not accept. For this would be nothing more than the separation of the Church from the real world, the consigning of the Church to the sacraments alone. The assertion that “religion is a private affair” is acceptable only insofar as it means that the state neither forces nor prevents anyone from choosing the religion of their choice. It most certainly does not mean that religion must succor only the “private” realm of human life or that the Church must be silent when biblical principles are violated in public life.²³

Religious convictions are private in the sense that the state has no jurisdiction over their formation and expression; however, they are not private in the sense of being without political implications. If someone believes, for example, that human beings are sacred and therefore ought not to be murdered, tortured, or enslaved, then expressing that belief in public, in order to support legislation of some kind, is entirely consistent with Michnik’s secular pluralism.

By *secularization*, Michnik says that he means “complete separation of Church from state, complete separation of state from Church, and complete civil rights for all.”²⁴ In the context of the indented quotation above, he is saying that the Church should not seek to administer the state. Neither should the state interfere with the Church’s liturgical, educational, prophetic, and other religious activities. Among the civil rights that everyone ought to enjoy is the right to express one’s deepest convictions when discussing a political issue. If there were no room for such expression in the public sphere, there would be no public dialogue about the ideals that ought to have a bearing on what the state prohibits, promotes, and celebrates. For this reason, the secular Left should expect the Church to be “an active presence.” Michnik approvingly cites the claim of German theologian Johannes Baptist Metz that the Church’s prophetic vocation encompasses “*social criticism*” and active “*cooperation* with non-Christian institutions and powers” for the betterment of society.²⁵

Secularization, in Michnik’s sense, is thus a process in which a single religious group that once dominated the political realm comes to be one among a plurality of voices in civil society. Michnik finds a different sense of *secularization* in the writings of Stefan Cardinal Wyszyński, primate of Poland from 1948 to 1981, who used the term to refer to “the purging of believers and of religious and Catholic elements” from the public square.²⁶ Michnik warns against being ensnared in “a semantic misunderstanding,” and laments the existence of “a terrible confusion of concepts in our language today.” What Wyszyński meant by “secularization,” Michnik says,

²³ *Ibid.*, 199f.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 139.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 201, original italics.

²⁶ Quoted in *ibid.*, 139.

“is merely a mask of totalitarian terror.” Michnik is at pains to differentiate the benign secularization he favors from what Jean-Marie Domenach called *secularism* (*laïcisme*), which entails “the dissemination of a materialist and atheistic philosophy to all of society.”²⁷ Rev. Jacques Leclercq describes secularization in the benign sense as a process in which “the state leaves the grip of the Church,”²⁸ but the state can leave the grip of the Church without in turn being dominated by secularists.²⁹

Secularism, of the aggressive sort that Domenach was criticizing, holds that the influence of religion on political life should be diminished as far as possible. Some secularist states, including the Soviet Union and the People’s Republic of Poland, used their coercive powers toward this end. A pluralistic society, in contrast, is one in which there are multiple groups which can express their outlooks in the public square, but no single group dominates. A pluralistic society is secular in the sense of not taking the outlook of one group, be it religious or not, as the basis of its public deliberation. But for a pluralistic society to be secular in this sense is not the same thing as its being *secularist*. Secularism, as Michnik is using the term, is the outlook of a particular group. If a polity adopts the outlook of that group as the basis for its deliberation, that polity would be both secular and *secularist* in character.

Since the collapse of communism in Europe and the emergence of a new Polish state, Michnik’s social criticism has had more and more to do with the distinction between secular democratic pluralism and a *theocratic* takeover of the state. A pure theocracy would be a society ruled by the self-appointed representatives of God on earth. While Michnik’s long-standing worries about theocratic tendencies in Polish Catholicism came increasingly to the fore after 1989, he still appears to have in mind the same basic contrast between dialogical democracy and domination that motivated him in 1979. Michnik sees both secularism and theocracy as forms of domination; in somewhat different ways, secularists and theocrats want to use state power to restrict the very terms in which political deliberation and contestation are conducted.

Secularists propose to free the public sphere from religion, which is equivalent to expecting everyone to speak and think *as if they were non-*

²⁷ Quoted in *ibid.*, 140.

²⁸ Quoted in *ibid.*, 141.

²⁹ Piotr H. Kosicki, in correspondence, has rightly insisted on the importance of keeping in mind that Michnik’s Polish terms for marking the key distinctions are *laicyzm*, *laickość*, *laicyzacja*, which derive from the French discourse of *laïcité*. Michnik’s references to Domenach and Leclercq show that he has the French discussion in mind. *Laicyzacja*, for Michnik, denotes the process of secularization, which is neither identical with, nor necessarily driven by, *laicyzm* (*laïcisme* or secularism), which is an ideology, rather than a process.

religious when engaging in politics. Theocrats think that the authority of the political order rests on a given set of religious assumptions. Secularists want politics to be conducted without reference to sacred value, while theocrats want politics to be conducted on the basis of a privileged conception of sacred value.

Secularism resembles theocracy in its commitment to deliberative monologue: they both aim to dictate, in advance of discussion, what sorts of premises may serve as reasons for political conclusions. Moreover, each appears to its opposite number, understandably, as an attempt to dominate the political order and thus as a betrayal of freedom. The democratic alternative to monologue, according to Michnik, is dialogue. By the latter, he does not mean a formal exchange between two speakers on a particular question, but a relatively freewheeling, plurivocal culture in which citizens of various persuasions are free to express their religious or anti-religious commitments when discussing public policy, but in which they refrain from using their power to dominate other groups or to cause offense frivolously.

Preventing and responding to calamities, to horrific evils, is a central task of modern politics. Jim Crow and communist dictatorship are only two of many vivid examples of such evils. But, if this is so, any attempt to keep religious commitments as such from influencing political decisions is bound to prove futile. The reason is that horrific evil and sacred value are conceptually related. We know something is sacred to us if we would view the prospect of its violation, destruction, or profanation not merely as bad, but as horrible. Michnik calls himself a humanist. He takes himself to be secular in the sense of being outside the Church, but he is committed nonetheless to holding some things as sacred, as worthy of reverent protection and celebration, as worthy of great sacrifice. To think otherwise would be to imply that *everything* is permitted under *some* imaginable circumstances. It would also be to suppress one's intuitive response of shuddering in the face of horrors. We are right to subject our intuitions to critical testing, to see which of them are mere expressions of prejudice. But to suppress all such intuitions in the name of considerations of mere utility would be to make ourselves less human.

Our experience of horrors shows that we intuitively regard some things as worthy of reverent protection. Having one's people conquered or systematically wiped out is horrific. Watching one's culture being destroyed by communist bureaucrats is horrific. Being humiliated by white racists is horrific. Being raped, tortured, or enslaved is horrific. Living in destitution is horrific. Being desperately sick or injured while being denied adequate medical care is horrific. Accordingly, we are wise to make institutional arrangements to protect one another from such things. And as long as we think so, the vocabulary of the horrendous and the sacred—or its functional equivalent—will have a role to play in democratic discussion.

We do not all find exactly the same things horrible, nor do we all find exactly the same things worthy of reverent protection. And when we try to explain what it is that gives sacred value to whatever is violated or destroyed by an action we consider horrible, we give various and conflicting answers. These derive, in turn, from differences in upbringing, sensibility, and life experience. Some of us feel certain about the answers we give, but many of us do not, and we should be prepared to admit that we are unlikely to achieve general agreement on such matters in our lifetimes.

Imposing one's conception of the sacred on others would involve the dominance of one group over others. This turns out to be one thing nearly all of us take to be horrendous when we are among the people being dominated. The principle of inclusive non-domination—of liberty and justice for all—implies that one takes domination as such to be *wrong*, even when we ourselves constitute the dominant group. Avowing the principle commits us to foregoing the benefits of dominance for the benefits of freedom and mutual recognition. It is this sacrifice that dialogical democracy asks of the secularist and the theocrat.

Neither the American struggle against Jim Crow, nor the Polish struggle against Soviet domination, would have accomplished what it did without forming a pluralistic coalition of religious groups and secular activists and intellectuals. These coalitions were largely the product of grassroots organizing, but King and Michnik helped things along discursively by mapping out a dialogical alternative to secularism and theocracy. The tone of King's speeches, essays, and books in the 1950s and early 1960s contributed heavily to the Civil Rights Movement's ability to win white support in the North. Michnik's charitable interpretations of progressive Catholic calls for dialogue, on the one hand, and his stringent criticism of Marxist secularism on the other, opened up a space where secular intellectuals, labor organizers, and Church members could join hands. The risks taken and the sacrifices made by King and Michnik were also significant factors in generating enough trust to hold their respective coalitions together for a time.

As I have already indicated, the dialogical spirit of King's oratory was far from perfectly embodied in his own practice. The movement as a whole often silenced the voices of female and young organizers, denied them due influence on decisions, and failed to recognize the importance of their contributions. In the middle and late 1960s, advocates of Black Power vigorously challenged King's presumed authority to speak for the movement as a whole, not least when commending dialogue, nonviolence, and sacrifice. The Civil Rights coalition was already fragmenting well before King's death in 1968.

Solidarity had its own internal controversies over the meaning and acceptability of the dialogical ideal, but the events of 1989 brought the movement to a different sort of end. In the 1970s and 1980s, Michnik was

a movement spokesperson, as well as an autonomous social critic. After 1989, there was no coherent movement for him to represent. At the moment of transition, he advised his fellow Poles to “construct an institutional order based on the ideas of dialogue and compromise.” By 1990, he was explaining why he felt bound to vote against Lech Wałęsa.³⁰

Because Polish independence created an opportunity for Catholic traditionalists to pursue a dominant position in the Third Republic, Michnik opposed “integristism,” which he defined as the attempt “to construct a state based on religious norms, to eradicate the boundary between religious and state norms, and to replace the philosophy of pluralism and tolerance with a doctrine that emerged in an ideological ghetto, the doctrine of the Catholic state of the Polish nation.”³¹ At the same time, Michnik chastised secularist “ultras” for desiring “the humiliation of the Church.”³² A shared interest in ending communist rule had bound Solidarity together, but now the interests of integrist and ultras appeared to diverge. It was time to learn who actually cared about dialogical democracy and who cared merely about not being dominated. How would the Third Republic handle the contentious issue of abortion? Michnik states that “[t]he debate over the penalization of abortion was a classic illustration of the argument about the axiological foundation of the state,” with the theocratic and secularist tendencies in Polish culture now taking concrete form. How would Poles who had been involved in the previous regime be held accountable? “The formula for which I was a spokesman—‘Amnesty, yes; amnesia, no’—turned out,” Michnik concluded, “to be too difficult for the people of the democratic opposition.”³³ A new theocratic ethnonationalism was not far to find.

3. American Parallels: The Culture Wars and beyond

The Civil Rights Movement’s successes in the courts and in Congress induced a severe backlash among those whites who resented being deprived of their previous position of dominance. The combined effects of feminism, gay liberation, the sexual revolution, opposition to the Vietnam War, and other sixties movements left many Americans feeling that *freedom* had be-

³⁰ Adam Michnik, *Letters from Freedom: Post-Cold War Realities and Perspectives*, ed. Irena Grudzińska Gross (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 126, 156–66. According to Piotr H. Kosicki (in correspondence), Michnik “was instrumental in convincing Catholic intellectual prime minister Tadeusz Mazowiecki to run for president *against* Wałęsa.”

³¹ Michnik, *Letters from Freedom*, 291, 108. Michnik takes his understanding of integristism, but not his appraisal of it, from Charles Maurras.

³² *Ibid.*, 309.

³³ *Ibid.*, 325, 324.

come synonymous with the destruction of traditional moral constraints of all kinds. By the late 1970s, this feeling had given rise to an organized Religious Right, and sent America careening toward open conflict over the cultural basis of democratic politics. The metaphor of the culture wars was meant to capture the resulting enmity.³⁴ Not only particular policy issues such as abortion, euthanasia, stem cell research, gay marriage, corporate deregulation, taxation, and war, but also the broader question of what roles religious ideas and organizations ought to play in public life, became matters on which every politician was expected to have a view.

The culture wars revolved around two approaches to the question of religion and politics: liberal secularism and Judeo-Christian traditionalism. These approaches differ in some important respects from their Polish counterparts. Liberal secularism is somewhat milder, on the whole, than the socialist secularism from which Michnik sought to wean the Polish Left in 1977; it does not propose eradication of religion so much as a moral or prudential restriction of it.³⁵ Judeo-Christian traditionalism, by comparison with its Polish Catholic counterpart, is a good deal more diverse; it is meant to appeal to all Jews, Protestants, and Catholics who fear that liberal secularism threatens to destroy the religious basis of democratic culture.

The emergence of Judeo-Christian traditionalism signals an important shift in American culture. One factor that had fostered a widespread consensus on the issue of church and state was the fear of being dominated politically by members of a religious group other than one's own. John F. Kennedy's presidency lessened that fear to some extent, as did the ecumenical discussions of the 1960s. More important, however, was the emergence of another fear in many American religious communities, namely that liberal secularism was now rising to dominance and seeking to privatize, marginalize, or undermine religion as such. It was primarily this fear that brought Judeo-Christian traditionalism into existence as a political force, and eventually gave rise to the New Religious Right. One should keep in mind, however, that the old fear has hardly been extinguished. For this reason, the Religious Right remains a somewhat tenuous coalition, uniting groups that regard one another as mistaken on matters of great importance.

The most important American journal of religious opinion during the culture wars was *First Things*. Rev. Neuhaus, the journal's founding editor,

³⁴ For an insightful account of the war metaphor and extensive illustration of its dangers, see Peter Alexander Meyers, *Civic War and the Corruption of the Citizen* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008).

³⁵ I discuss several varieties of contemporary secularism, including the more militant type associated with the "new atheists" in Jeffrey Stout, "2007 Presidential Address: The Folly of Secularism," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 76 (September 2008): 533–44.

first drew national attention in the 1960s as a white Lutheran pastor of a largely black congregation, an avid supporter of civil rights, a critic of US military involvement in Vietnam, and an opponent of abortion. In 1965, he helped to organize Clergy Concerned about Vietnam, a group in which King participated. (The group was later renamed Clergy and Laity Concerned about Vietnam.) By the mid-1970s, however, Neuhaus had become a neoconservative. In 1984, he published *The Naked Public Square*, a bracing critique of secularism that comes close to embracing the position Michnik calls integrism, but with an ecumenical twist.³⁶ In 1990, Neuhaus was ordained as a Roman Catholic priest, and was soon to become the most vocal American defender of the personalist pope from Kraków, Saint John Paul II.

In *The Naked Public Square*, Neuhaus referred repeatedly to Alasdair MacIntyre's claim that ethical discourse in the modern period is so fragmented that it can no longer sustain rational deliberation. Lacking agreement on the ultimate purpose of human life, MacIntyre argued, citizens are unable to resolve their differences through an exchange of reasons. Public discussion thus becomes a mask for the assertion of arbitrary preferences. If shared ethical deliberation in religiously diverse societies is a sham, there is no point in trying to revive a culture of citizenship and dialogue in the hope of holding liberal elites accountable. The only sensible course is to devote one's energy to what MacIntyre, in *After Virtue*, had called "the construction of local forms of community" within which the tradition of the virtues might survive the "new dark ages which are already upon us."³⁷

In the 1960s and 1970s, George Grant occupied roughly the same position in Canadian political discussion that MacIntyre has occupied in the United States since 1981. It might be that Grant's 1974 Josiah Wood Lectures, entitled *English-Speaking Justice*,³⁸ directly influenced MacIntyre during the period in which he abandoned Marxism, formulated his narrative of modern decline, and eventually re-entered the Roman Catholic communion he had left some years before.³⁹ Grant, MacIntyre, and Neu-

³⁶ Richard John Neuhaus, *The Naked Public Square: Religion and Democracy in America* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1984).

³⁷ Alasdair C. MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981), 263.

³⁸ George Parkin Grant, *English-Speaking Justice* (Sackville, NB: Mount Allison University, 1974).

³⁹ The main thing that sets Grant apart from MacIntyre is the former's Heideggerian emphasis on technology as a mark of the modern. Grant linked the rise of technology to two themes that MacIntyre places at the center of his own narrative of decline: first, the collapse of a notion central to "traditional philosophy and religion . . . that justice is the overriding order which we do not measure and define, but in terms of which we are measured and defined," and second, the consequent

haus all discuss modern democratic politics mainly under the heading of “liberalism,” which they take to be a very bad thing indeed. They view liberalism as an attempt to make sense of the content of justice without making reference to the overriding teleological order given, as Grant put it, in “the Bible (and the classical philosophy which the early Christians thought necessary for understanding the Bible).”⁴⁰ *English-Speaking Justice*, seven years before the publication of *After Virtue*, ended by reflecting on “the terrifying darkness” that has fallen on our political discourse. When charged with taking an excessively grim view of modernity, Grant once remarked that he was not pessimistic in the least: “I think God will eventually destroy this technological civilization. I’m very optimistic about that.”⁴¹

Grant articulated his view of citizenship and democratic responsibility in the following trenchant words:

To speak of the moral responsibility of the citizen in general is impossible; the question entirely depends on the kind of regime in which one is a citizen. The United States is a world empire—the largest to date. Its life at home is controlled by mammoth corporations, private and public, and through these bureaucracies it reaches out to control a large proportion of the globe and soon beyond the globe. The nineteenth-century idea of the democratic citizen making the society he inhabits by the vote and the support of political parties must have less and less meaning. In local matters, the citizen of an empire can achieve some minor goals. But he cannot shape the larger institutions or move the centers of power. Democratic citizenship is not a notion compatible with technological empires.⁴²

Grant wrote these words in 1966, fifteen years before the publication of *After Virtue* and eighteen years before the publication of *The Naked Public Square*. If such an appraisal of modern ethical discourse were correct, then it would seem that democratic citizenship is a lost cause, and we ought to direct our energies into other channels. This was precisely Grant’s conclusion. Similarly, if MacIntyre’s “after virtue” story were correct, no genuinely dialogical political friendship would be possible on a large scale in a country like the United States, and there would be no point in reviving a

emergence of liberal individualism, in which reasoning about justice is reduced to calculation of self-interest under self-imposed (autonomous) constraints. See Grant, *English-Speaking Justice*, 79.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 80.

⁴¹ Quoted in Daniel Westberg, “A Canadian with Vision,” *First Things* 47 (November 1994): 58.

⁴² George Grant, “A Critique of the New Left,” in *The George Grant Reader*, ed. William Christian and Sheila Grant (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), 85.

pluralistic ideal of citizenship. The only reasonable option would be to identify strictly with the small communities of virtue at the margins of liberal society, while waiting patiently for God or fate to bring down a hopelessly unjust, senseless, individualistic order which lacks the discursive means to right itself.

Neuhaus was not, however, prepared to go this far in his condemnation of modern liberal society, for he thought the Religious Right had an opportunity to repair the sacred canopy over the public square in America. His recitation of the “after virtue” story created an ecumenical anti-liberal identity for traditionalist Christians and Jews to assert forcibly in the public square. He was not arguing for withdrawal into marginal communities of virtue, as MacIntyre and Grant were; rather, he was preparing the way for traditionalist participation in a conservative takeover of the three branches of government in the United States. The “after virtue” story functioned simultaneously to debunk liberalism—as an essentially secularist outlook in which freedom amounts to an absence of ethical constraint—and to depict marginalized traditionalist religious communities, also kept in soft focus, as the residual locus of true virtue. For Neuhaus, unlike Grant and MacIntyre, all of these moves were intended to create a new, bold, religiously motivated form of conservative political activism, as friendly to a deregulated economy and to military intervention abroad as it was unfriendly to the welfare state. Neuhaus was casting his lot with Reaganite Republicanism.⁴³

It is important to recall that the period in which MacIntyre introduced his version of the dichotomy between tradition (understood as the *sine qua*

⁴³ In an article originally posted on the website of the Notre Dame Center for Ethics and Culture on October 8, 2004, MacIntyre claimed that the choice between the Republican and Democratic candidates for the presidency should simply be refused as unacceptable. We all owe our children “the best chance that we can give them of protection and flourishing from the moment of conception onwards. And we can only achieve that if we give them the best chance that we can both of a flourishing family life, in which the work of their parents is fairly and adequately rewarded, and of an education which will enable them to flourish.” This obligation entails not only “doing whatever is most effective in reducing the number of abortions,” but also meaningful work and adequate compensation for everyone, where adequacy is defined as an income “sufficient to keep a family well above the poverty line.” The Republican Party is officially pro-life, but utterly incapable of addressing the issue of economic justice. The Democratic Party is officially interested in promoting economic justice, but for the most part blind to the moral significance of abortion. Moreover, both parties compromise their official positions whenever doing so increases their chances of acquiring power. To support such parties with one’s vote, MacIntyre concluded, would be to make oneself complicit in injustice. Neuhaus appears to have had no such reservations.

non of authority and virtue) and liberal modernity (understood as essentially after virtue) is the same period in which the Reagan and Thatcher administrations adopted a similar rhetorical schema in their attempts to justify scaling back government spending on social programs while increasing spending on military might. In the United States, the invocation of traditional virtue and the scapegoating of liberals became the order of the day for conservative politicians and the pundits defending them, as well as for the Religious Right. A growing public now wanted to be told that the key to virtue was to be found in increased identification with one's religious tradition and in the relentless thrashing of liberals. Reaganite conservatives were pleased to bracket the more disturbing implications of the Grant-MacIntyre diagnosis of the "new dark ages." Reagan's oft-repeated slogan was: "It's morning in America." As his supporter, Neuhaus had little use for MacIntyre's critique of capitalism. For that matter, most American conservatives simply ignored John Paul II's somewhat milder worries about unrestrained capitalism. The conservative coalition effected a divorce of Catholic teaching on abortion, euthanasia, stem cell research, and sexual conduct from the Church's long tradition of support for state intervention on behalf of the working class and the poor.

Neuhaus continued to support the militarism of the Republican Party in the two decades after the demise of the Soviet Union. He failed to highlight the role that increasingly unchecked megacorporations have played since 1980 in destroying the stability of the communities whose values are lauded by conservatism. One can easily see what kind of nostalgia Neuhaus's conservatism expressed, but nobody can say what, aside from the lifestyle of corporate executives and the power of well-placed prelates, it succeeded in conserving. It was not a social safety net for the poor and the elderly. It was not a peaceable balance of power among nations. It was not the environment. Nor was it the culture of small towns, tightly knit neighborhoods, and family farms. All of those things were in fact being pulled apart by the economic and military elites that had risen to dominance in American life along with Reaganite conservatism.

"Compassionate" conservatism professes love of the very things that are being destroyed. The adjective seemed necessary only when citizens began to notice the harsh consequences of the programs being enacted. Voters wanted reassurance that the people proposing the programs were not themselves unfeeling, and found such reassurance in the professedly Christian motivations of politicians like George W. Bush, for whom Neuhaus became a major advisor and advocate. From Neuhaus's point of view, the younger Bush's presidency must have seemed a good political vehicle for melding American patriotism and a highly selective appropriation of Christian themes. Neuhaus supplied Bush with elegantly crafted arguments against same-sex coupling, euthanasia, stem cell research, and abortion, while

downplaying papal teachings on social justice and arguing for a remarkably permissive interpretation of Catholic teachings on just war.⁴⁴ Whatever the intentions of these two men, one effect of their Christian rhetoric was to put a kinder and gentler face on economic and military policies whose effects were neither kind nor gentle.

As we have seen, Neuhaus's opposition to abortion goes back to the 1960s, when he was a leader in the anti-war movement. Over time, he came to view his opponents on abortion as not only wrong about the matter at hand, but also culpable for misusing their divinely given rational capacities when thinking about that issue.⁴⁵ Once it is assumed that the Vatican's opponents on abortion *must* be reasoning irresponsibly, given that there can be no reasonable disagreement on matters where the objective moral law is presumed to be perfectly clear, it became natural to ask what might explain the fairly widespread dissent from official Catholic teachings that one finds both inside and outside the Church.

Neuhaus's answer, quite simply, was *sin*. Affirmation of a "new culture of life" requires a struggle against its radically sinful competitor. As John Paul II put it, "This reality is characterized by the emergence of a culture which . . . in many cases takes the form of a veritable 'culture of death.'"⁴⁶ This stark contrast between a culture of life and a culture of death explains why many American Catholics are not interested in dialogue with their liberal opponents. Moreover, many Protestant theologians see the debates over abortion and related issues in roughly the way that Neuhaus did. Consider, for example, "Between Beasts and God," an essay that Lutheran

⁴⁴ It is important to note that not all Catholic opponents of abortion have combined rigorism on sex, marriage, and abortion with permissiveness on social inequality and militarism. One noteworthy example is the stand taken in the mid-1980s by John Finnis, Joseph Boyle, and Germain Grisez in favor of immediate nuclear disarmament in Finnis, Boyle, and Grisez, *Nuclear Deterrence, Morality, and Realism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987). See also the late Cardinal Joseph Bernardin, *A Consistent Ethic of Life* (Chicago: Sheed and Ward, 1988), an interpretation of Catholic social teaching that could never be confused with the outlook of either major party in the United States.

⁴⁵ According to Robert P. George, a Catholic member of the *First Things* editorial board, believing that some abortions are morally permissible is "so deeply misguided and wrong as to be unworthy of respect." Robert P. George and Christopher Wolfe, "Natural Law and Public Reason," in *Natural Law and Public Reason*, ed. Robert P. George and Christopher Wolfe (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2000), 51–74, at 62. George and Wolfe make clear, however, that "people of general reasonableness who happen to hold that position [i.e. that some abortions are morally permissible] should be respected" as persons. It is the position itself and the taking of it that are alleged to be unworthy of respect.

⁴⁶ John Paul II, *The Gospel of Life* (New York: Random House, 1995), 22.

theologian Gilbert Meilaender published in *First Things*, around the time that he was appointed to the President's Council on Bioethics (2002).⁴⁷

Once upon a time, according to Meilaender, human beings knew their place in the chain of being. Beneath them were the beasts; above them was God. To behave in a way appropriate to one's status as a human being was, on the one hand, to avoid sinking to the level of the beasts by acknowledging the responsibilities proper to one's station and, on the other, to avoid playing God. The beasts have no responsibilities—at least none that they take on themselves. God, however, is the author of all things, the one who, by assigning us our roles in our communities, gives us specific areas of responsibility, while also setting limits on that responsibility. When most people lived according to something like this vision, they lived genuinely human lives—lives of limited responsibility.

But then, according to Meilaender, something awful happened. We effectively eliminated God from the picture by usurping God's role. "In our own time," Meilaender wrote, "we have come to think of ourselves more and more in terms of will and choice." We have come to think of ourselves as "independent individuals" and to "suppose that freedom is the sole truth of human existence." As a result, we have denied the limits of our spheres of responsibility. We have made it our own responsibility to master death and suffering. We have, in other words, begun to play God—and in doing so, we have turned ourselves into mere beasts.

The choice we are offered in Meilaender's essay turns out to be between, on the one hand, godless worshipers of freedom and, on the other, theological defenders of responsibility within limits. Meilaender associated the former, quite literally, with bestiality.⁴⁸ His most striking claim was that even to give "moral standing" to a suffering patient's questions about assisted suicide "is to live a lie." The term "lie" here implies a willful attempt to deceive, a deliberate abandonment of goodwill. It so happens that I am one of those prepared to approach such questions with an open mind. Suppose a friend or family member in truly horrible pain, and at great distance from medical services, were to plead with me to hasten his or her death. I see nothing wrong with asking whether this is something justice might require of me someday. The question strikes me at the very least as one we ought to take seriously. Meilaender holds that even asking this

⁴⁷ Gilbert Meilaender, "Between Beasts and God," *First Things* 119 (January 2002): 23–29.

⁴⁸ In 2001, utilitarian philosopher Peter Singer had published a brief essay entitled "Heavy Petting," which discusses sex between humans and members of other mammalian species without registering a sense of horror. See Peter Singer, "Heavy Petting," *Utilitarian.net*, accessed February 14, 2018, <http://www.utilitarian.net/singer/by/2001----.htm>.

question makes me a willful deceiver—someone deliberately twisting a truth that is plain for all to see.

As far as I can tell, my question does not derive from what John Paul II condemned as a “society excessively concerned with efficiency.” Nor am I fairly described, I hope, as making war “against the weak.”⁴⁹ My concern, as I understand it, is to care for my friends and family members, to give them what I truly owe them under justice. My touchstone, assuming that sinfulness has not clouded my thinking, is the desire to do unto others what I would have them do unto me. If I were stranded in a distant forest, dying in agonizing pain, I imagine myself begging my fellow campers for mercy. The thought experiment shows that the Golden Rule, rather than some vile or selfish consideration, *can be* the source of my question. The point I am making is simply that neither raising the question nor dissenting from the position of Neuhaus and Meilaender *need be*, in itself, to live a lie, to set oneself against life, to play God. It *can be* rather to invite others into an honest dialogue about highly important things on which reasonable people of goodwill differ.

When one imagines one’s opponents as in thrall to a culture of death, one can easily infer that dialogue with them is useless. While neither Meilaender nor Neuhaus drew this conclusion, many people affiliated with the Religious Right appear to have done so. Otherwise, it would be difficult to explain the toleration that religiously conservative Republicans have shown to President Trump’s deliberately abusive verbal behavior. His excuse is that he is fighting dominant coastal elites intent on spreading a culture of death. Dialogue is for patsies when your enemy is both despicable and within punching distance. Trump’s core supporters and Antifa protestors are in agreement on that point, at least.

The sort of freedom that Meilaender has in mind when imagining the mindset of his liberal opponents is a mere absence of constraint—the sort of freedom Hegel associated with the Terror of the French Revolution. Meilaender does not discuss the sort of freedom Michnik valorizes, which is made possible by mutual recognition and a legal system that places *constraints* on domination. Neuhaus and Meilaender surely classify secularism and communist dictatorship as forms of domination. When considering these topics, they implicitly endorse freedom as security against domination. To my knowledge, however, they have never acknowledged that freedom, understood in this way, is something that people of goodwill have reason to care about when discussing issues like abortion and euthanasia, let alone tax rates, the regulation of corporations, and the conditions of just warfare.

As a result, the difficulty of resolving these issues fairly in a religiously diverse culture rarely comes into view in their writings. Even within par-

⁴⁹ John Paul II, *The Gospel of Life*, 22.

ticular religious communities, not everyone is of one mind on what is to be counted as sacred and what is to be counted as horrendous. These are things that reasonable people of goodwill can see differently. To view something, in one's heart of hearts, as horrendous provides the strongest sort of motive for wanting to see it prohibited under law. And yet, being forced to live under a legal system that expresses *someone else's* conception of the sacred and the horrendous can itself be horrendous if it results from one group's political domination over others. That is how things will seem to whatever group loses out politically, unless intellectuals, leaders, and public officials work hard at reframing the most profoundly divisive issues dialogically.

Charles Taylor, a distinguished Canadian philosopher and occasional politician, is a good example of a Roman Catholic who, though concerned about secularization, does sometimes reframe divisive issues in a genuinely dialogical way. Here is a passage in which he counsels his fellow Catholics to embrace a politics of reconciliation:

Redemption happens through Incarnation, the weaving of God's life into human lives, but these human lives are different, plural, irreducible to each other. Redemption-Incarnation brings reconciliation, a kind of oneness. This is the oneness of diverse beings who come to see that they cannot attain wholeness alone, that the complementarity is essential, rather than of beings who come to accept that they are ultimately identical. . . . Our great historical temptation [as Catholics] has been to forget the complementarity, to go straight for the sameness, making as many people as possible into "good Catholics"—and in the process failing of catholicity: failing of catholicity, because failing of wholeness; unity bought at the price of suppressing something of the diversity in the humanity that God created; unity of the part masquerading as the whole.⁵⁰

In reading these words, I wonder what the politics of life and death would have looked like in the United States over the last three decades if *First Things* and other conservative publications had followed the example of the Catholic journal *Commonweal* by adhering steadfastly to Taylor's tone of reconciliation. The result might have been to make plain that, while some people sincerely find *all* abortions horrendous, there are other people, no less sincere and well motivated, who find *some* abortions not horrendous but sad. To respond to a very early abortion with sadness rather than horror, and then find oneself unmoved by metaphysical arguments for the moral equivalence of all abortions, is not to enlist in a culture of death. Of course, there are other possible responses to abortions besides horror and

⁵⁰ Charles Taylor, *A Catholic Modernity?* ed. James L. Heft (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 14.

sadness. But it seems to me that an extended dialogue between the horrified and the saddened could have recast the issue in less dualistic terms.⁵¹

It is ironic, as well as unfortunate, that many Americans who take themselves to be engaged in a struggle against the culture of death have thrown their support in recent elections to politicians who oppose restrictions on guns, favor capital punishment in a much wider range of cases than the Vatican does, pursue an unrestrictedly militaristic foreign policy, support torture of suspected terrorists, defend the possession of nuclear weapons, slash taxes on the incomes of billionaires, seek to minimize the regulation of banks and megacorporations, ignore the facts of global warming and the dissemination of nuclear waste, and make life as difficult as possible for many immigrants and refugees. It is hard to see how someone who wants to be in accord with Roman Catholic social teaching or with the Bible's expressions of compassion for the poor, the widow, the resident alien, and the tortured Christ can rationalize backing politicians of this sort.

That the 1995 papal encyclical *The Gospel of Life* was intended to carry forward the noble tradition of Catholic social teaching on treatment of the poor can be inferred from John Paul II's brief reference to the need "to unmask the selfishness of the rich countries which exclude poorer countries from access to development." From John Paul's point of view, any defensible ethic of life must involve much more than a position on medical ethics, biological research, and same-sex coupling. He went on to ask, "Should we not question the very economic models often adopted by States which, also as a result of international pressures and forms of conditioning, cause and aggravate situations of injustice and violence in which the life of whole peoples is degraded and trampled upon?"⁵²

Indeed we should. But this question has largely been eclipsed in the recent American debate over religion and politics. One effect of *The Gospel of Life* on US politics was to assist the Republican Party in its successful attempt to gain control of all three branches of government in the early 2000s. Preoccupation with abortion, stem cell research, and euthanasia brought many Catholics and their conservative Protestant allies into a strangely amicable political alliance with people opposed to Catholic teachings on war, capital punishment, torture, and governmental obligations to the poor. It remains to be seen how many Christian traditionalists will remain in this increasingly awkward—I would suggest untenable—position during the Trump presidency.

⁵¹ For reflections on one commendable attempt to transform the debate over same-sex marriage, see Jeffrey Stout, "How Charity Transcends the Culture Wars: Rogers and Others on Same-Sex Marriage," *Journal of Religious Ethics* 31, no. 2 (2003): 169–80.

⁵² John Paul II, *The Gospel of Life*, 32–33.

Neuhaus's ecumenical traditionalism was grounded, as I have said, in a set of claims about democracy itself: that it cannot survive as a morally respectable form of political life on the basis of liberal secularism; that it requires a citizenry largely united in agreement on divine sovereignty and the sanctity of life; that religious convictions ought therefore to play a foundational role in public discourse; and that religious citizens and institutions ought to take the lead in guiding public discussion and shaping the national ethos. It is possible to disagree with Neuhaus on this or that policy question and still agree with his main claims concerning the relation of religion and politics.

That his traditionalism was deliberately ecumenical, that Neuhaus was *not* proposing the establishment of any particular church as the official public religion of the United States, might be thought to exempt his view from a critique such as the one Michnik offers of monolithically Catholic integrism in Poland. Neuhaus explicitly presented his traditionalism as a proposal about how to sustain *democracy*. One can imagine Neuhaus saying, in his own defense, that *ecumenical* traditionalism is inherently dialogical, albeit within certain limits. The limits derive from a realistic appraisal of the cultural conditions under which democracy can be expected to thrive. Any type of dialogical democracy, he might say, must set some such limits, on pain of undermining itself. From Michnik's perspective, Polish integrism and Marxist secularism go beyond those limits. Neuhaus construed the limits more narrowly, in part because he doubted that unbelievers could have *adequate grounds* for behaving democratically. Disagreement on policy questions concerning life and death struck him as evidence of erosion in the moral basis of democratic culture.

Neuhaus was, in effect, putting forward an empirical thesis about democracy's likely fate if that erosion continues. But the evidence for this thesis is variously interpreted from different points of view. It goes without saying that culturally conservative Jews and Christians are disposed to agree with one another on the issues being disputed in the culture wars. Only if we assume that the traditionalists are correct, not only on these issues but also on issues concerning economic policy and war, does the evidence appear to imply that governmental support for traditionalism is an apt cure for democracy's ills. To assume this, however, is to beg the question. From my own point of view, the Religious Right's policy proposals have been a *moral* disaster across the board, a conclusion that hardly supports a traditionalist lesson about how to cure democracy's ills.

4. Does Dialogical Democracy Have a Future?

The great value of Michnik's account of dialogical democracy, when applied to the American case, lies in its implication that citizens do not face an exhaustive choice between a theological and a secularist basis for political deliberation. Traditionalists and secularists will, no doubt, remain in the discussion. As long as they do, they will give one another reason to think that a simple choice must be made between dominating and being dominated. Dialogical democracy, by enacting an inclusive politics of non-domination, aims to reorient the discussion in a fundamental way.

Michnik, I have argued, views secularism and theocracy as forms of domination,⁵³ and presents dialogical democracy as an attempt to forge a middle path between them. He values dialogue because society includes multiple points of view, religious and secular, that need to be aired if no group is to be dominated. Solidarity could not take Catholic doctrine as its sole acceptable basis without alienating secular intellectuals like Michnik himself. Yet it could not take secularism as its sole acceptable basis without alienating Catholics. For the coalition to hold together, the groups participating in it would have to respect each other as worthy dialogue partners in the coalition's internal deliberations. Participation in a democratic coalition brings with it a responsibility to listen to others in the coalition, to take their points of view seriously, and to engage respectfully in reasoning with them. The New Religious Right was similar to Solidarity in its commitment to treating its own coalition members dialogically. *First Things* was a product of ecumenical dialogue in the civil rights era. Neuhaus wanted the journal to exhibit respectful dialogue among all Catholics, Protestants, and Jews who shared his concerns about democracy's fate in a secular age. He used the term "dialogue" when promoting conversation among religious communities that had formerly identified one another as heretical or satanic. Toward them, he behaved dialogically.

Michnik argued that the dialogical ideal had stringent implications for Solidarity's long-term objectives. Coalition members had to be united not only in thinking of Soviet domination of Poland as a grave injustice, but

⁵³ The term *secularism* is sometimes used in other ways. When Akeel Bilgrami uses it, for example, he has in mind something quite different from the ideology Michnik criticizes under that heading, something that Michnik might or might not find objectionable. Bilgrami, *Secularism, Identity, and Enchantment* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), chapter 1, discusses Charles Taylor's argument for redefining secularism as a policy for avoiding both domination of the religious and domination by the religious. Because ideological labels are always subject to resignification in such ways, they tend to cause confusion when positions bearing the labels are compared and assessed. We are free to push the "ism" aside whenever it causes confusion.

also in striving to create a new Polish republic that would itself strive to include *all members of society* in a dialogue—a respectful, frank exchange of various conflicting arguments—about what Poland’s arrangements and policies ought to be. That dialogue would have to be secular, but not secularist, if it too was to avoid becoming a vehicle of ideological domination. Neuhaus pursued a somewhat different path between theocracy and secularism. He sought a polity grounded in a kind of ecumenical reconciliation, not a polity that would be secular in Michnik’s sense. *Secular society*, in Neuhaus’s lexicon, is not a product of reasonable disagreement among people of good will. Secularization is a product of advancing secularism, an ideology bent on domination. Nonbelievers are to be addressed with the respect due to all human beings, but also to be diagnosed and resisted as carriers of an implicitly anti-democratic ideology. Michnik’s distinction between *secular* and *secularist* appears to have no role in Neuhaus’s thinking.

Since 1989, with communist secularism no longer in power, Michnik has become increasingly concerned that a theocratic tendency in Polish Catholicism threatens to undermine dialogical democracy.⁵⁴ After the collapse of communism, the Catholic majority had to decide how far to press its numerical advantage. Was the objective to dominate other groups, or to enter into dialogue with them on equal terms? This is the most important question Michnik posed to his fellow Poles.

A similar worry has arisen in the United States over the New Religious Right’s drift toward outright theocracy. Few overt defenders of theocracy held federal office in the US between 1980, when Ronald Reagan won the presidency, and the beginning of Donald J. Trump’s campaign for the presidency in 2015. Roy Moore’s almost-successful 2017 campaign to represent Alabama in the US Senate brought a somewhat different mixture of themes to the national stage. Moore’s commitment to white supremacy and American exceptionalism echoed George Wallace, who served as Governor of Alabama for sixteen years and ran for the presidency in 1968, 1972, and 1976. To these depressingly familiar tropes, Moore added an overtly theocratic element that has only recently become prominent in the rhetoric of the Religious Right. Credible accusations of pedophilia against Moore did not prevent President Trump from endorsing him, nor the Republican National Committee from funding him. Had those accusations been absent, he would likely now be in the US Senate. His theocratic reasoning led to his suspension as Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Alabama in 2003 and again in 2016, but such reasoning did not prevent him from becoming the new face of the Religious Right.

⁵⁴ See, for example, Michnik, *The Church and the Left*, xiv-xvi; Michnik, “Interview,” *Constellations* 2, no. 1 (1995): 1–9.

We need to be clear about what is happening. The Religious Right is currently devouring some of the traditional norms Neuhaus set out to protect. Because those norms include constitutional constraints on executive power and moral constraints on dishonesty, corruption, and hateful speech, some patriots and traditionalists formerly affiliated with the Religious Right feel obliged to jump ship. A critical moment is at hand, in which no one associated with the movement will be able to evade the necessity of choice.

President Trump does not belong to the Religious Right; the Religious Right, at present, belongs to him. His profession of faith is as palpably insincere as his commitment to truth or justice. He will make use of true believers as long as they serve his purposes. A lust for domination defines his style; he plainly intends to dominate others insofar as he can, and to exacerbate domination based on class, gender, and race insofar as he can. The US Constitution provided Americans with little protection against these forms of domination. It did, however, provide some protections against overly concentrated governmental power. These worthy features of the Constitution now appear in grave jeopardy, because Trump is deliberately undermining them. Millions of voters who identify with the Religious Right are complicit in this effort. Vice President Mike Pence, their obsequious spokesman, loses a little more dignity and a little more integrity every day. The excuse is that the culture of death must be fought at all costs. The immediate objective is a right-leaning majority on the US Supreme Court, while the immediate cost might be American constitutional democracy. The New Religious Right is killing democracy in order to save it.

Trump's strategies have already been employed with some success in Poland, Hungary, Romania, and Russia, for that is where Stephen K. Bannon discovered them. As a result, Michnik's critique of Polish integrism has stronger relevance to the United States than it did a few years ago. Nowadays ethnonationalists on several continents are gaining power, joining forces, swapping ideas, hijacking elections, hollowing out constitutions, spreading lies, and sowing discord. One of their long-term common objectives is the removal of constraints on executive power, and one means to that end is the disruption of respectful, truthful dialogue. Vladimir Putin will supply some disruption electronically for a modest *quid pro quo*. But in America, the main help Trump needs is the compliant silence of the Religious Right. He can take care of the lies and humiliation on his own. When the volume of lies reaches a certain point, the conventions of ordinary communication break down, and the practices of discursive accountability essential to democracy wither. That is what the lies are for, when they aren't needed to cover up malfeasance and treachery.

The purpose of sowing discord is to prevent democratic coalitions from forming across lines of difference. Such coalitions are the primary agents of

accountability in genuinely democratic republics. Putin understands this, as does Trump. Disrespectful speech is now a self-conscious rhetorical strategy, enacted daily and without shame from the presidential podium. Its goal is to make respectful response seem feeble, naïve, and pointless. The slut-shaming and racist innuendo that President Trump is directing against female senators as I write these words is meant to leave them without *dialogically respectful* recourse. Whatever they say in response will be derided in the next tweet as shrill or submissive, unwomanly or weak. Similar ploys are used against protestors in the streets and blacks on the playing fields, against judges who set back his agenda, and against journalists who expose his wrongdoing. All such persons are potential checks on executive power, so they must be battered, day in day out, until everyone is exhausted and there are no checks left.

The situation is disturbing but neither unique nor hopeless. Trump has more power than Wallace had, but his rallies, speeches, and insults are cut from the same cloth. Theocracy is the new wrinkle, but it is really just a sop Trump throws to the true believers in his base. Dialogical democracy was invented in struggles against Hitler, Mussolini, and Stalin. It is a way to fight thugs and demagogues ethically, not an invitation to tea.⁵⁵ It demands sacrifice, fortitude, and rigorous self-criticism. It will need imagination to find a path forward, and poise to keep its balance when under assault. The latest assault is underway.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Rabbi Abraham Skorka, a friend of Pope Francis from his days in Argentina, has contrasted the demands of dialogue with “tea and sympathy.” James L. Fredericks, “The Dialogue of Fraternity: Pope Francis’s Approach to Religious Engagement,” *Commonweal*, last modified March 21, 2017, <https://www.commonwealmagazine.org/dialogue-fraternity>. Pope Francis has not only made the ideal of dialogue a central theme of his papacy, but has also repeatedly hinted at its political implications, as in *Evangelii Gaudium*, chapter 4 and many speeches. Sometimes, as in his address to participants of Scholas Occurrentes on May 30, 2016, he makes the dialogical path seem less sacrificial or confrontational than it often is: “In dialogue everybody wins, and no-one loses” (quoted in the *National Catholic Reporter*, June 16, 2017.) Perhaps he meant only that *fully reciprocated* dialogical respect achieves this happy result. He brings out the sacrificial dimension of dialogue more clearly in his concluding remarks at the Good Friday Way of the Cross, March 29, 2013. I regret that I do not have space here to consider Francis more fully, let alone to survey the history of papal teachings on dialogue, beginning with Pope Paul VI’s *Ecclesiam suam*. All of the relevant papal writings and statements can be found online at *Vatican.va*.

⁵⁶ I wish to thank Molly Farneth and Piotr H. Kosicki for many helpful comments on the first draft of this essay.

CHAPTER 5

The Virtue of Not Inventing Anything

István Rév

The following reconstruction does not aim at explaining who had a decisive role in ruining the Soviet system, nor in which ways they did so. My task is rather to map those inhibiting factors that prevented the events from turning violent in the course of the 1989–1990 transition (except, to a certain very limited sense, in Romania); that averted the outbreak of a classical revolution—known so well from the textbook examples of the French and the Bolshevik revolutions; that thwarted the use of conspiratorial methods in the course of the collapse of communism; that self-constrained the anti-communist oppositions; that effectively persuaded their members to sit down and negotiate with the representatives of the old regime; and that made it difficult, unnecessary, and seemingly counterproductive to invent anything, but convinced them to make use of available, ready-made, well-tested ideas, procedures, and institutional solutions, taken from working democracies with functioning market economies.

It would be plausible to argue that there is no need for any reconstruction. There is an old joke that explains everything. When a newly arrived pilgrim asks the first local he encounters why the bell does not ring in the village church, the local responds: “there are a thousand and one reasons for that. The first reason is that we do not have a bell in the church to start with. . .”

It would perhaps be enough to state that the memories of the bloody Soviet interventions in 1953 in Berlin, in 1956 in Budapest, in 1968 in Prague, and in 1979 in Kabul, were strong enough factors of constraint—even after Gorbachev abandoned the so-called “Brezhnev doctrine” in 1988.¹ Nobody could be sure at the time of the collapse—Gorbachev him-

¹ On November 13, 1968, at the Fifth Congress of the Polish United Workers’ Party, Leonid Brezhnev announced, “When forces that are hostile to socialism try to turn the developments of some socialist country towards capitalism, it becomes not only a problem to the country concerned, but a common problem and concern of all socialist countries.” On July 6, 1989, however, addressing a meeting of the Council of Europe, Gorbachev declared, “The social and political order of

self included—how much credit should be given to the promise of non-intervention; how the Secretary General would handle the unforeseen events; how far the Soviet military leadership and the KGB would retreat when faced with the dissolution of the Soviet empire. As Adam Michnik remarked, “the desire to resist has been paralyzed by the specter of Soviet military intervention and Soviet tanks in the streets of Warsaw. The memory of Budapest and Prague has led many people to believe that the Soviet leaders will not allow any changes whatsoever.”²

The possible threat coming from the East could not be underestimated even in 1989, and that alone constrained the vision, the ambitions, and the behavior of the oppositions, which felt that they had to make use of the moment provided by the unexpected historical opportunity. The oppositions in Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary did not aim at starting a revolution. They had—for good reason, as we will see—deep and ever-growing distrust in “The Revolution,” and they tried hard to persuade the local communist leaders, the secret services, and the Soviet Union that what was happening in Central Europe was not a revolution; the movements, allegedly, were intended to find a solution out of the crisis, and not to overthrow the regimes. The rhetoric, which at times even constituted self-delusion, proved so successful that on June 16, 1989, after the reburial of Imre Nagy, the executed Prime Minister of the 1956 Revolution—the single most important event of the Hungarian transition when communism was effectively laid to rest in the grave of the murdered politician—the head of the Hungarian communist security services could state with confidence in his report to the Politburo: “No extraordinary event worth mentioning took place in the course of our daily activities. There was no need for any police action.”³

At the same time, uncertainty over the Soviets’ willingness to intervene pulled the rug from under the feet of the Soviet satellites’ unstable leaders, and their well-founded doubts forced them to sit at the roundtables in the hope of finding a quick compromise in a world of crumbling certainties. The uncertainty of the threat on the one side, and the threat of uncertainty on the other, defined the frame of negotiations, but not their actual content

some countries changed in the past, and it can change in the future too, but this is entirely a matter for each people to decide. Any interference in the internal affairs, or any attempt to limit the sovereignty of another state, friend, ally, or another would be inadmissible.”

² Adam Michnik, “A New Evolutionism,” in *Letters from Prison and Other Essays*, trans. Maya Latynski (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 143.

³ Report by Ferenc Pallagi, head of Department III/III of the State Security Organization, in János Kenedi, *Kis Állambiztonsági Olvasókönyv*, vol. 2 (Budapest: Magvető, 1996), 387. The State Security chief followed in Louis XVI’s footsteps: on the day the Bastille was seized by revolutionaries, the king wrote in his diary, “*Rien*”—“Nothing happened.”

and outcome.⁴ Even in the midst of the unfolding events—in large part, shaped by the ongoing negotiations themselves—there was room for alternatives.

The reconstruction that follows has a limited goal: to assess the inhibiting factors that influenced, in a decisive way, the direction the oppositions chose to take.

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Edward Gibbon, the preeminent expert of decline and fall, wrote: “The story of its ruin is simple and obvious; and instead of inquiring why the Roman Empire was destroyed, we should rather be surprised that it had subsisted so long.”⁵ The case of the communist empire is rather different. Although—from the perspective of its unexpected fall—we should be surprised that it had lasted so long, it would be disingenuous to say that its ruin was simple and obvious; far from it. The historian, nevertheless, is ill-equipped to provide a satisfactory exposition about the surprising, and surprisingly rapid, fall of that seemingly eternal empire.

The Fall was surprising and surprisingly rapid in part because of the overvaluation of the stability of the Soviet empire by academic groups, intelligence circles, and lay observers. Compared to the accepted overtermination of the factors responsible for the supposed longevity and unshakable nature of the Soviet system, the coming of the Fall proved to be utterly un(der)determined.⁶ Historians, who are in Paul Veyne’s words, “prophets in reverse,”⁷ are in the business of retrospectively overdetermin-

⁴ As François Furet remarked about the history and historiography of the French Revolution: “A phenomenon like the French Revolution cannot be reduced to a simple cause-and-effect schema. . . . The revolutionary event, *from the very outset*, totally transformed the existing situation and created a new mode of historical action that was not intrinsically a part of the situation.” Furet, *Interpreting the French Revolution*, trans. Elborg Forster (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 22, original italics.

⁵ Edward Gibbon, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Vol. II (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1840), 442.

⁶ As Timothy Garton Ash noted ten years after the Fall: “I don’t myself think that there are many historiographical revelations and many great secrets waiting to be discovered about the causes of 1989. The trouble is that we have too many causes; the outcome of 1989 has come to be seen as almost overdetermined, as somehow an inevitable result.” Timothy Garton Ash, “Conclusions,” in *Between Past and Future: The Revolutions of 1989 and their Aftermath*, ed. Sorin Antohi and Vladimir Tismăneanu (Budapest–New York: CEU Press, 2000), 396.

⁷ Paul Veyne, *Did the Greeks Believe in their Myths? An Essay on the Constitutive Imagination*, trans. Paula Wissing (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 103.

ing past events, in order to provide sufficiently robust explanations for the causes of mostly ineradicable and/or usually undeniable outcomes and consequences. As Furet noted in connection with histories of the French Revolution: “The postulate that ‘what actually happened’ did so of necessity is a classic retrospective illusion of historical consciousness, which sees the past as a field of possibilities within which ‘what actually happened’ appears *ex post facto* as the only future for that past.”⁸ In the quest for sufficiently strong and persuasive explanations after the fact, historians are tempted to present multiple conditions, in order to prove that the perceived outcome had been straightforwardly predetermined in the womb of antecedent developments. I am no exception: my analysis will put real weight on certain factors—some of which cannot be directly connected to the main actors of the moment of the transition, however, still undoubtedly were “up in the air”—that presumably contributed to the ideas, ideals, strategy, and tactical plans of the negotiating opposition.



After 1956, when the US army—despite the “liberation doctrine” or, more precisely, the liberation rhetoric of the Truman and Eisenhower administrations—failed to intervene in the Hungarian revolution, not only the public, but also the decision makers and experts, understood that communism and the Soviet empire were here to stay for the long run. (While before 1956, *déclassé* aristocrats-turned-taxi drivers had been still addressed as Count X or Baron Y, after the defeated revolution that solidified the Soviet system, they became simply cab drivers.) As Adam Michnik remarked in his influential essay written after the brutal crushing of the workers’ revolt in Radom in June 1976, the starting point of the revisionist ideas after 1956 “was geopolitical realism and a rejection of the Poles’ supposed predisposition to revolt—a lesson learnt from the tragedy of the 1944 Warsaw Uprising.”⁹ Area specialists, be they historians, social scientists, or intelligence experts both East and West, made a living betting on the strength and stability of the Soviet empire; they tried hard to clarify in a credible way the supposed solidity, even permanence, of the Soviet system.

⁸ Furet, *Interpreting the French Revolution*, 19, original italics. The passage continues with the following remarks: “hidden away in the sound and fury of the Revolution, were the promises of an early form of socialism. French history thus assumes the status of a new beginning, and the event itself becomes a kind of crucible in which the past was abolished, the present was constituted and the future was shaped. Not only was what happened fore-ordained; it also contained the seeds of the future.”

⁹ Michnik, “New Evolutionism,” 139.

“Regardless of feelings about the nature of the system,” wrote György Bence and Seymour Martin Lipset after the changes, “the Left agreed with the Right that the Soviet regime would not be overthrown and that any consideration of its breaking down from within was a near impossibility. . . . Most Sovietologists assessed the situation [even] in the 1980s in ways that did not allow for the coming revolutionary changes. What they did was, in fact, no less daring than to expect a revolution. They expected, to wit, just the opposite of what happened.”¹⁰

Krzysztof Pomian, the Polish émigré historian, noticed—although after the fact—that the communist regimes evolved from the totalitarian exercise of power to the exercise of authoritarian power, and what happened around 1989 was nothing other than the inevitable and unstoppable disintegration of authoritarian rule; a fate that befalls, sooner or later, every authoritarian regime. This is “the normal paradigm of the decomposition of authoritarian regimes . . . but no one seems to have diagnosed the departure of totalitarianism and the replacement of one political regime by another.”¹¹

The reason for this ignorance, according to Pomian, was simple: there was no one who would have been able to notice what was going on. For the communists, both the reality and, particularly, the fiction of continuity were crucial. It would have been fatal to admit any serious ideological rupture, institutional or major political change; the regime had to cling to the fiction of disrupted continuity, as if from the moment of Bolshevik revolutionary victory, the very same regime had existed in all the Soviet-dominated parts of the world. In Pomian’s words,

The Party was supposed to have always followed a straight line; it was admitted certainly that there had been errors and misrepresentations, even crimes, but all of that had been corrected by the Party itself, and things had gotten back to normal. This is to say that the Party leaders obsessed by the appearance of stability and by their ideological convictions, did not realize the depth of the changes that were taking place and of their possible long-term effects. They did not even have the words to describe them.¹²

On the other hand, the revisionists, members of the anti-communist opposition, and the dissatisfied population in general, became convinced by the

¹⁰ Seymour Martin Lipset and György Bence, “Anticipations of the Failure of Communism,” *Theory and Society* 23, no. 2 (April 1994): 173 and 175, respectively.

¹¹ Krzysztof Pomian, “Postscript on the Ideas of Totalitarianism and of the ‘Communist Regime,’” in *Stalinism and Nazism: History and Memory Compared*, ed. Henry Rousso, trans. Lucy B. Golsan (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004), 302–3.

¹² *Ibid.*, 303.

defeat of the 1953 Berlin uprising, the crushing of the Polish revolts in 1956, in the 1970s and 1980s, the fate of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution, the Prague Spring of 1968, and so forth, that the real nature of the regime was unquestionably totalitarian. Whenever and wherever dissent came to the surface, the response was an invariably identical ruthless reaction. The lesson, and thus the perception that nothing could change, was reinforced over and over again, despite the slow and—in hindsight—terminal weakening of the regimes.

The democratic oppositions of Eastern and Central Europe—whose members were gradually embracing liberal ideas by the 1980s—came close to a sort of political theory that the political philosopher Judith Shklar termed “the liberalism of fear.” The memories of 1953, 1956, 1968, and of the introduction of martial law in Poland on December 13, 1981, the ever-present possibility of the return of “arbitrary, unexpected, unnecessary and unlicensed acts of force and . . . habitual and pervasive acts of cruelty and torture performed by the military, paramilitary, and police agents” obviously created the perception that nothing changes, or anything might happen again; the totalitarian essence of the regime remained unaltered.¹³ The perception of the opposition implied that they were living under “systematic fear, the condition that makes freedom impossible, and it is aroused by the expectation of institutionalized cruelty as by nothing else.”¹⁴ The liberalism of fear, as Judith Shklar claimed, “is entirely nonutopian. In that respect it may well be what Emerson called the party of memory rather than a party of hope.”¹⁵ As the British philosopher Bernard Williams remarked, historical memory is the essential constitutive element of the liberalism of fear; “it is on this faculty of the human mind that the liberalism of fear draws most heavily.”¹⁶

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The task of the day, following the unforeseen events of 1989–1990, became to prove that the Fall was nothing but inevitable. Whereas Gibbon had the opportunity to claim that something historically new, Christianity, offered

¹³ Judith Shklar, “The Liberalism of Fear,” in *Political Liberalism: Variations on a Theme*, ed. Shaun P. Young (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004), 157.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 157.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 154.

¹⁶ Bernard Williams, “The Liberalism of Fear,” in *In the Beginning Was the Deed: Realism and Moralism in Political Argument*, ed. Geoffrey Hawthorn (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), 55. Williams’s text continues: “The most immediate memory is at present the history of the world since 1914. . . . We say ‘never again,’ but somewhere someone is being tortured right now, and acute fear has again become a common form of social control.” *Ibid.*, 55.

the main element of explanation, that “the decline and fall of Rome suggested a picture of new societies, laws, customs, superstitions, something to be described in its various stages rather than to be deduced from certain premises,”¹⁷ the historians of 1989 are not able to find anything radically new, comparable to the rise of Christianity. As Timothy Garton Ash, the professional chronicler of the 1989 transition, stated: “I have yet to hear what big new ideas emerged from the revolution of 1989 to compare with ‘liberté, égalité, fraternité’ of 1789 or to compare with ‘all power to the Soviets’ and the idea of a heaven built upon earth, the communist utopia. There was no distinctively new project for the remaking of society in 1989. The project was in essence one that already existed elsewhere in Europe.”¹⁸

There was no distinctively new project offered, as all the indigenous or radical anti-communist, anti-totalitarian, or anti-capitalist projects of the decades before 1989 seemed to fail miserably: the workers’ councils in Hungary in 1956; the outcome of the romanticized Cuban revolution; the consequences of the national liberation movements of the 1950s and 1960s; the reform socialisms of the 1960s; “socialism with a human face” in Prague in 1968; the student uprising in Warsaw in the same year; the Chinese Cultural Revolution; Che Guevara’s adventure in Bolivia, chronicled, romanticized and turned into a guerrilla warfare manual, *Revolution in the Revolution?*, by one of Althusser’s students, Régis Debray; the New Left of the 1960s; anti-modernization theories; the liberation of South Vietnam that ended with the colonization of Cambodia; the late 1960s student movements in the West that turned into a nightmare on June 5, 1970, when in the first communiqué of the RAF, Ulrike Meinhof called to “build up the Red Army”; the misunderstanding of the role, nature and potentials of the so-called “second economy” under communism that was equated mistakenly and tragically either with the village commune, the gift economy, or an evolutionary stage of growing out organically from the socialist command economy; the obvious futility of retrotopia, the anthropological turn of critical social science that embraced anthropological lessons of the primitive in its quest for usable anti-capitalist, anti-consumerist, anti-statist, and anti-centralist traditions from the non-Western parts of the pre-modern world; the fall and consequences of Allende’s socialist experiment in Chile, when large segments of the population gave up supporting the democratic regime; the horrors of the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia—with the potential influence of radical Western anti-modernization theories on the leaders of the regime; the Sandinistas’ brutal revolution in Nicaragua; the impotence and perceived disingenuousness of Eurocommunism; the

¹⁷ Arnaldo Momigliano, “Gibbon’s Contribution to Historical Method,” *Historische Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte* 2, no. 4 (1954): 459.

¹⁸ Garton Ash, “Conclusions,” 397.

failure and irresponsible behavior of the Left during the revolution in Portugal in 1975, which had serious repercussions on the Left in France; the religious fundamentalist outcome of the Iranian revolution which, in its initial stages, made Michel Foucault so curious that he traveled there twice and wrote several sympathetic articles on the revolution for *Corriere della Sera*, *le Monde*, and *le Nouvelle Observateur*, some of which were translated into Persian and posted on the walls of Tehran University in the fall of 1978; the disillusionment from the revolutions in Portugal and in Iran, discrediting revolution as a possible political solution even in retrospect; the imposition of martial law in Poland, perceived as proof of the impossibility of genuine, worker-led autochthonous alternatives in Eastern Europe; the perceived shallowness and irrelevance of anti-politics, advocated by Václav Havel, György Konrád, and others. Seemingly every project of the era ended in desperate disappointment.

By the time the Berlin Wall fell, even the remnants of the autochthonous political traditions of the Central and Eastern European dissidents seemed to be of no use anymore. As Michnik wrote from his prison cell in 1984:

[T]he shadow of the “possessed” from Dostoyevsky’s novel looms over every underground movement. Every conspiracy demoralizes. In its depths flourishes the spirit of a sect that uses a language all its own, that is based on rites of initiation, on tactics to which everything is subordinated, on an instrumental attitude toward truth, and on disregard for any values that are not political. There is a unique type of activist-conspirator, whose characteristics make him as useful in the underground as they are dangerous later on. Such an activist has to make arbitrary decisions, to distrust newcomers and strangers. A spirit of democracy is not one of the virtues required by a conspiracy; pluralism is not the style favored by it. Underground activity isolates people from the taste and the smell of everyday life, skews perspectives, gives birth to dangerous absolutism and intolerance. Conspiracy requires disobedience to the enemy and obedience to the underground central command. It proclaims equality but within itself calls for hierarchical subordination. Conspiracy thrives on the spirit of Manichaeism: “He who is not with us is against us.”¹⁹

The last representatives, who hoped against hope for an untried solution—such as the East German writer and moralist Christa Wolf, who in January 1990 still said that the unification of East and West Germany would amount to an Anschluss—became completely isolated, pushed aside by the events and the mood of the public. The landscape, far and wide, was less than promising. Nothing seemed to work, nothing seemed to emerge as an autochthonous anti-communist alternative; there was a feeling that the

¹⁹ Michnik, *Letters from Prison*, 60.

entire repertoire had been attempted, all imaginable solutions had already been acted out, and all to no avail.

The repeated Soviet interventions in Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Afghanistan, and the real or imagined threat of Soviet military interference in Poland, made both the rapidly growing number of dissatisfied citizens and the opposition understandably cautious in Eastern and Central Europe. After the decades of long queues, grave shortages, unfulfilled promises, and permanent states of emergency behind closed borders, the majority most likely longed for normality: not for new experimentation, but for working solutions and tangible consumer goods. “Nobody wanted a revolution. And when I see what the so-called revolution has brought—mass poverty, homelessness, self-styled capitalists selling off our plants and pocketing the money—I think we were right,” recalled Solidarity member Anna Walentynowicz, ten years after the transition.²⁰ Revolution, both in official propaganda and the public imagination, was equated with the Bolshevik Revolution (and with its Bolshevik-proclaimed precursor, the French Revolution of 1789); the population under Soviet regimes became weary of sacrifices, preached by the propagandists of the Party and not taken seriously by anyone for a very long time. “There are no more battles in the twentieth century that are not tainted or dubious,” claimed François Furet, around the time of the publication of his *Penser la Révolution française*, a work that meant to announce not only the end of the French Revolution but the end of Revolution as such (and a work which plays a central role in my overdetermined analysis below). Power was known from the slogan “all power to the Soviets”; this was one of the reasons why there were not too many volunteers for capturing power at the moment of the Fall. Power was seen as inherently unclean, compromising its holder; the dissidents did not “want to lead anyone,” concluded Havel after having surveyed the landscape in his 1978 work *The Power of the Powerless*.²¹



From the early 1970s, in part influenced by the samizdat publication of Hannah Arendt’s classic *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, and by the underground publication of Robert Conquest’s *The Great Terror* in the Soviet Union in 1972, a neo-totalitarian understanding of the nature of the Soviet

²⁰ Roger Cohen, “The Accommodations of Adam Michnik,” *New York Times*, November 7, 1999, <https://partners.nytimes.com/library/magazine/home/19991107mag-europe-michnik.html>.

²¹ Václav Havel, “The Power of the Powerless,” in *The Power of the Powerless: Citizens against the State in Central-Eastern Europe*, ed. John Keane (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1985), 82.

system gained currency, especially—though not exclusively—in the East. “[T]here is no such thing as non-totalitarian ruling communism,” claimed Adam Michnik. “It either becomes totalitarian, or it ceases to be communism.”²² Friedrich von Hayek, especially his work *The Road to Serfdom*, published in samizdat editions in the Soviet Union and other communist countries, influenced a growing number of disillusioned reform economists, including Václav Klaus,²³ in their perception of the socialist planned economy. After Hayek had been received by Pope John Paul II in 1980, his prestige grew in Poland too. His libertarian ideas, transmitted and watered-down by Milton Friedman in the late 1970s and 1980s, contributed to the neo-totalitarian interpretation of the socialist economy. After the Fall, György Bence and Seymour Lipset retrospectively contrasted the totalitarian model with the so-called social science approach of the “pluralist school” in Sovietology, which they considered a “well-informed error” in opposition to the totalitarian paradigm, which “[a]lthough much maligned by [Western] Sovietologists in the 1970s and 1980s . . . has proven to be the most fruitful of the paradigms.”²⁴

Lipset and Bence argued that the reemergence of the totalitarian understanding of communism—that it presented a model highly resistant to demands of change—prevented any anticipation of the impending end of the communist system.²⁵ From the perspective of my analysis, it is more important to note that the totalitarian perception of communism made the oppo-

²² Michnik, *Letters from Prison*, 47.

²³ See Václav Klaus, “No Third Way Out: Creating a Capitalist Czechoslovakia,” *Reason* (June 1990): 28–31.

²⁴ Lipset and Bence, “Anticipations of the Failure of Communism,” 181.

²⁵ György Bence was receptive to classical totalitarian and neo-totalitarian analysis. In 1986–87, he organized a so-called “parallel seminar,” in distant cooperation with Adam Michnik, together with the sociologist Jerzy Szacki, in Warsaw, and Jeffrey Goldfarb and Ira Katznelson at the New School in New York. Members of the seminar, myself included, read the same works; the theme of the first year was “totalitarian theory,” including Hannah Arendt’s *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. Due to the lack of fax machines, translated transcripts of the discussions were smuggled in and out of Poland and Hungary. The experience was like the defunct practice of playing chess by mail, when players had to wait, sometimes for several weeks, for the next move to arrive.

On Monday, February 27, 1995, more than five years after the Fall of the Berlin Wall, *Népszabadság*, the largest circulation Hungarian daily and the former official newspaper of the Communist Party, reported that “more than four years after the reunification of Germany, the athletes of the GDR accomplished their last sporting success. The GDR won third place in the ‘Postal’ (or ‘Correspondence’) Chess Olympiad that had started back in 1987. The championship that lasted for eight years was spared from the stormy changes of politics and history, as the gold medal went to the Soviet Union, another country that does not exist anymore.”

sition even more receptive to the model of Western liberal democracy. As Lipset and Bence state:

However decisive it seemed on the academic playing fields of Sovietology, the victory of the pluralist school turned out to be hollow. It was one thing to write an epitaph on “totalitarianism” in a scholarly encyclopedia, or to apply the somewhat Orwellian stratagem of eliminating the idea of totalitarianism from a leading academic textbook, but it was another to make the public oblivious of the danger of totalitarianism. “Totalitarianism” became a part of the political language, and due to its literary representations by such writers as Koestler, Milosz, Orwell, and Silone, the totalitarian model took a firm hold on the imagination of politically informed people in the West and, to an ever-growing extent, in Eastern Europe, too. By the end of the 1970s when Sovietological pluralism seemed to be at its apogee, the second coming of “totalitarianism” was well on the way. . . . After 1968 when, as it seemed, the last attempt to renew the Communist system on the basis of a revised version of its own ideology was defeated by the invading armies of the Warsaw Pact in Czechoslovakia, a continuously growing number of Soviet and East European dissidents had become interested in totalitarian theorizing.²⁶

Foucault was misread by most in Eastern and Central Europe. *Discipline and Punish* was understood as if it had not been written on the dark side of the Enlightenment project (“the ‘Enlightenment’ which discovered the liberties, also invented the disciplines”) but as if it had been a description of the modern—primarily communist—totalitarian state, known so closely in Eastern and Central Europe. The Eastern European readers did not quite notice Furet’s observation: “For the authors they [the former sixty-eighters in the West] admired—Marcuse, Foucault, Althusser—totalitarianism only persisted in the bourgeois order. It would be difficult indeed to find a critical analysis of ‘true socialism’ in the twentieth century.”²⁷ Foucault, who lived briefly in Poland in 1958, and who criticized the unprincipled response of the French government to the imposition of martial law in Poland in 1981, wrote about the forced psychiatric treatment of Soviet dissidents for the *Partisan Review*. He was supposed to know Eastern and Central Europe: he played a role in the establishment of the *Comité du 5 janvier pour une Tchécoslovaquie libre et socialiste*, in 1970, that gave support to persecuted intellectuals of the post-1968 Prague “normalization.” Moreover, his work with the Prison Information Group (*Groupe d’information sur les prisons*), established in February 1971 together with the

²⁶ Lipset and Bence, “Anticipations of the Failure of Communism,” 191.

²⁷ François Furet, *The Passing of an Illusion: The Idea of Communism in the Twentieth Century*, trans. Deborah Furet (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 493–94.

historian Pierre Vidal-Naquet and *Esprit* editor Jean-Marie Domenach, was seen from the eastern part of Europe as an intervention in the service of anti-totalitarian efforts in the East. (The actual cause that triggered the founding of the Group was the inhuman treatment of leftist radicals, mostly Maoists, in French prisons.) His words about the prison system in the West were understood as a description of life under communism:

There is no one among us who is certain of escaping prison. Today less than ever. Police control is tightening on our everyday life, in city streets, and on the roads; expressing an opinion is once again an offense for foreigners and young people, and antidrug measures are increasingly arbitrary. We live in a state of "custody." They tell us that the system of justice is overwhelmed. That is easy to see. But if the police are the ones who have overwhelmed it? They tell us that the prisons are overcrowded. But what if the population is overprisoned?²⁸

In his first interview after his release from prison in 1984, Václav Havel talked at length about Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, and Foucault's analysis of the modern prison system.²⁹ The misreading, far from having disheartened the illusion in Western-style rationalism, liberties, and rule of law, in fact provided ammunition for the critique of the seemingly totalitarian states in the East. Looked at from the perspective of the neo-totalitarian understanding of the Soviet system, and the spectacular and enormously costly failure of all anti-totalitarian efforts across the world, Western liberal democracies gradually became considered as the only viable alternative.

"For me," wrote Michnik in 1976, "Czechoslovakia is an example of the fragility of totalitarian stability, and also of the desperation and ruthlessness of an empire under threat."³⁰ Jacques Rupnik, the Czechoslovak-born French political scientist who would become Havel's adviser at the beginning of the 1990s, argued in his book on the transformation of Eastern Europe that the concept of totalitarianism became an object of misunderstanding in East-West communication. During the Stalinist period, when the situation in Eastern Europe closely resembled the world described by proponents of totalitarianism, and the totalitarian paradigm dominated in Western debates, the concept was obviously absent in Eastern and Central Europe, where no public debate could take place. Rupnik noted that:

twenty years later, when the concept had been virtually banished from Western Sovietology as an unscientific product of the Cold War, it was reappropriated by

²⁸ Quoted by Didier Eribon, *Michel Foucault*, trans. Betsy Wing (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991), 224.

²⁹ See Havel's interview with Antoine Spire, in *Open Letters: Selected Prose 1965–1990*, ed. Paul Wilson (London: Faber, 1991), 241–42.

³⁰ Michnik, *Letters from Prison*, 139.

all the independent thinkers in East-Central Europe. The watershed year 1968 marked a political parting of the ways and was a catalyst, which set the concept of totalitarianism on a separate course, East and West. In the West, 1968 marked the dawning of détente, which profoundly affected the way in which politicians, academics, and journalists addressed the nature of the Communist system. For intellectuals of the Other Europe the Soviet tanks in Prague were seen as a final evidence of the failure of reform from within and of the existence of a permanent totalitarian “core” at the heart of the Communist system.³¹

What contributed to the growing popularity of the totalitarian perception of the post-Stalinist regimes was not so much its descriptive, but its rhetorical power. The totalitarian identification of existing socialism after 1968 emphasized—from a strictly analytical point of view, perhaps mistakenly—the fundamental continuity of the Soviet-type system. The totalitarian reading played an important intellectual and political role in the process of further delegitimation of the regimes east of the Berlin Wall.



Rupnik was not the only political scientist who thought (mistakenly) that there was a sharp divergence between the understanding—and use—of the term “totalitarian” in East and West. Jeffrey Isaac found it “supremely ironic” that “just at the moment when the concept of ‘totalitarianism’ was losing its plausibility in the West, it was helping to fuel democratic activism in the East.”³² Rupnik might be right in his assessment of the way Western politicians, political scientists, and certain sociologists perceived the nature of communism after the beginning of the 1970s. However, the world, and even the intellectual world, does not consist solely of politicians and political scientists. It seems that political scientists do not read historians, as historians, especially those in France, perceived communism in a radically different way.

The collapse of the communist regimes (not entirely accidentally, as I will argue) coincided with the bicentenary of the French Revolution, and the particular perception of the revolution of 1789, inspired by influential “neo-Tocquevillian,” revisionist interpretations, shaped the course of events in 1989.

Lipset and Bence, curiously, failed to mention an important event: the French publication of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn’s *The Gulag Archipelago* in 1974, which sold more than a half a million copies in the first

³¹ Jacques Rupnik, *The Other Europe* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1989), 224.

³² Jeffrey C. Isaac, “Critics of Totalitarianism,” in *The Cambridge History of Twentieth-Century Political Thought*, ed. Terence Ball and Richard Bellamy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 196.

year.³³ The publication of the book coincided with the so-called Carnation Revolution in Portugal—the precursor of the future nonviolent revolutions in Eastern and Central Europe of 1989—which almost fell apart as a consequence of an attempted leftist coup d'état, led by the adventurist Otelo Saraiva de Carvalho and backed by the armed branch of the Portuguese Communist Party, in November 1975. The Portuguese developments triggered the return of the fear that unreconstructed communist parties, not having learned the lessons of history, would try to exploit historical opportunities, and continue to embark on radical revolutionary experiments.

Solzhenitsyn's book claimed that there had been a direct connection between 1917 and the Gulag, the revolution, and the labor camps, a reading that would have a major influence on twentieth-century reinterpretations of the French Revolution. The French Communist Party (PCF), at that time a member of François Mitterrand's Union of the Left, considered the book and its publication to be part of a concerted anti-Soviet campaign, aiming to discredit and weaken the French communists inside the Union of the Left. For members of the non-communist left, however, both the book and its French communist reception (or the book in the context of the communist reception) offered an opportunity to raise concerns about the role of the PCF in the Union of the Left, along with the dangers that the remnants of Stalinist and pro-Soviet leftist ideas might pose to the French system, or more general democratic political developments. The French reaction to Solzhenitsyn's book was much more heated than its reception in other Western countries, without a strong, pro-Soviet, largely unreconstructed Communist Party destined to become a member of the ruling parliamentary majority.³⁴ As Furet noted after 1989: "In France . . . 'the new philosophers' brought an end to that immunity [a resistance to critical analysis of 'true socialism'] by finally allowing the concept of totalitarianism to be applied to the history of the Soviet Union. But the French case was unique, owing to the exceptional reception that the publication of *The Gulag Archipelago* received in France."³⁵



³³ The success of Solzhenitsyn's book could be compared to Arthur Koestler's *Le Zéro et l'Infini*, the French translation of *Darkness at Noon*. "In France it was published after the end of the war, and sold over four hundred thousand copies. . . . The reason why *Le Zéro et l'Infini* broke all pre-war records in French publishing history was not literary but political." Arthur Koestler, *The Invisible Writing: The Second Volume of an Autobiography: 1932–1940* (New York: MacMillan, 1954), 490.

³⁴ On Solzhenitsyn's reception in France, see Michael Scott Christofferson, *French Intellectuals against the Left: The Antitotalitarian Moment of the 1970s* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2004).

³⁵ Furet, *The Passing of an Illusion*, 494.

Furet explicitly referred to Solzhenitsyn in his *Penser la Révolution française*, the work that established his position as the leading revisionist historian of the Revolution in the decade leading to its bicentenary: "Solzhenitsyn's work has become the basic historical reference for the Soviet experience, ineluctably locating the issue of the Gulag at the very core of the revolutionary endeavor. Once that happened, the Russian example was bound to turn around, like a boomerang, to strike its French 'origin' . . . Today the Gulag is leading to a rethinking of the Terror precisely because the two undertakings are seen as identical."³⁶

Furet wrote the first part of the book, the chapter "The Revolution is over," in 1977, "at the time when," in his words, "the criticism of Soviet totalitarianism, and more generally of all power claiming its source in Marxism, is no longer the monopoly, or near monopoly, of right-wing thought and has become a central theme in the reflections of the Left."³⁷ By inverting the Marxist understanding of the French Revolution, Furet intended not only to provide a revisionist interpretation of the Revolution, but a devastating critique of the history-writing of the Left that—according to his argument—made the Left blind to the roots, the nature, and the consequences of radical revolutionism, Jacobinism, the Terror, totalitarianism, the Bolshevik Revolution, Lenin, Stalin, the Soviet Union, and the Gulag.

"In 1920, [French historian Albert] Mathiez," claimed Furet, "justified Bolshevik violence by the French precedent, in the name of comparable circumstances. 'The two revolutions'—continued Furet—"remain connected; but while fifty years ago they were systematically absolved on the basis of excuses related to 'circumstances,' . . . they are today, by contrast, accused of being, consubstantially, systems of meticulous constraint over men's bodies and minds."³⁸ Furet goes on to quote *Le Bolchévisme et le Jacobinisme*, a pamphlet written by Mathiez and published by l'Humanité Press in 1920: "Jacobinism and Bolshevism are dictatorships of the same kind; both are born out of civil and foreign war; both are class dictatorships, using the same means: terror, requisitioning, and price controls; and both ultimately pursue the same goal, the transformation of society, and not just the transformation of Russian and French society but of society in general."³⁹ Furet continued, "What they [the Marxist historians] love about the Soviet Revolution is . . . the superimposing of one image of liberation on another; over the fabric of our contemporary history seen as a religion of progress is placed the image of the Soviet Union now assigned the role

³⁶ Furet, *Interpreting the French Revolution*, 12.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 11.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 12.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 85.

played earlier by France. . . . The interpretation of the French Revolution has thus produced a kind of Lenino-populist vulgate."⁴⁰

In his interview with Marie-Laurence Netter, Raymond Aron demonstrated that not only former Marxists or leftists superimposed Bolshevism on top of the French Revolution: "I believe that somewhere I wrote, or at least I thought, that the Bolsheviks were Robespierristes who had succeeded. . . . Today, there exist a number of books which rewrite the history of the French Revolution retrospectively in the light of Stalin."⁴¹



The reinterpretation of the French Revolution in the 1970s should be seen as both following the internal logic of historiography—starting, perhaps, with Furet and Denis Richet's *La Révolution française* in 1965, and continuing with Mona Ozouf's *Fête révolutionnaire, 1789–1799*, published in 1976—but also as a consequence of facing the history of the twentieth century, the history of the communist regimes; primarily by historians, who, uneasily, felt compelled to account for, or at least find a plausible-sounding explanation for their own past on the Left or in the French Communist Party. Any reinterpretation of the Revolution, therefore, cannot be properly understood without taking into consideration contemporaneous Eastern and Central European developments, along with their Western, and most prominently French, receptions.

The arrival of forced emigrants from Warsaw and Prague in 1968, including writers, scholars, important historians, political scientists, and philosophers (and even historians of the French Revolution) brought Central Europe closer to the West, and made the Western intellectual public more receptive to the untenable and unacceptable nature of existing socialism. Paris was the home of members of subsequent waves of emigration from Eastern and Central Europe, including Poles, Czechs, and Hungarians. As a result, the city became the center of émigré publications: both those directed toward the home country, and those intended to inform and mobilize the Western, primarily French, public. In 1976, Michnik stayed for a longer time in Paris, where he successfully campaigned for the new democratic opposition and in support of KOR, the Polish Workers' Defense Committee.

Sergei Kovalev, one of the founders of the first Soviet human rights group, the Action Group for the Defense of Human Rights, in 1969, was arrested and sentenced to seven years' forced labor in 1974. The Moscow

⁴⁰ Ibid., 88–89.

⁴¹ Marie-Laurence Netter, "Raymond Aron and the French Revolution," *European Journal of Political Theory* 2, no. 4 (2003): 375 and 378, respectively.

Helsinki Group—the first Eastern European dissident organization to monitor compliance with the human rights provisions of the Helsinki Accords—was established in 1976 by Yelena Bonner, Anatoly Shcharansky, and Lyudmila Alexeyeva, among others. In 1977, the Working Commission to Investigate the Use of Psychiatry for Political Purposes was formed in Moscow. News about court proceedings against Soviet dissidents and refuseniks, about imprisonment and employment blacklists in Hungary and post-1968 Czechoslovakia, anti-Semitic campaigns in Poland and the Soviet Union, the forced psychiatric and medical treatment of dissidents in Russia, the firing of workers in Poland, about strikes, uprisings, and imprisonments, reached a concerned, more attentive public in the West.

Between 1960 and 1969, a little more than 4,000 Soviet Jews left the country, while in the next decade, their number exceeded 200,000. Indeed, in 1979 alone, 51,320 Jews emigrated from the Soviet Union. A significant number of the emigrants did not continue their journey to Israel, instead going to the US or Canada, but a substantial number—in large part, intellectuals—remained in Europe. Their arrival in the West coincided with growing professional and public awareness of the twentieth-century history of cruelty, especially the Holocaust (in France, not least as a consequence of the activities, the scandals and the retribution suffered by Serge and Beate Klarsfeld, who set up *l'Association des fils et filles des déportés juifs de France* in 1979). News of discrimination against Jews in the Soviet Union and in other Soviet satellite countries, their stories, and their proximity contributed to the emerging popularity of classifying both fascism and communism under the rubric of totalitarianism.

From the middle of the 1970s, totalitarianism—not only the communist but also the national socialist type—as understood in France, in Poland, and in the Soviet Union, was increasingly used to refer to a moral imperative, and became connected to the growing awareness of human rights. From the middle of the decade, as comparative victimization began to substantiate the graveness of human rights violations, communist crimes began figuring side by side with the Holocaust and genocide. As Irving Howe wrote earlier, the concept of totalitarianism “has helped us to maintain a moral response.”⁴² For Furet and the neo-Tocquevillians, the French Revolution, especially between 1789 and 1793, the problem of the Terror, and the role and responsibility of the Jacobins were reflected in the newly discovered mirror of human rights, and their violations under the Bolshevik and Nazi regimes.

Furet and the revisionists took the self-perception of the Bolshevik Revolution seriously and turned it inside out. For the Bolsheviks, the Revo-

⁴² Irving Howe, *Steady Works: Essays in the Politics of Democratic Radicalism, 1953–66* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1966), 240.

lution was a reenactment of its French predecessor, while for Furet, the French Revolution was not the model and the rehearsal of its Bolshevik successor, but instead the seeds of the Bolshevik Revolution had already been sown in the fall of 1789. The Bolsheviks—according to Furet—continued the work of Robespierre; the Terror was the womb that birthed the subsequent tragic, inhuman, totalitarian experiments of the twentieth century. For Furet, the Bolsheviks did not only represent their revolution as the second coming of the French forerunner, but it originated from the very same roots. Any understanding of the Gulag in the history and the historiography of the twentieth century should start with an understanding of the inscribed program that—supposedly—led from 1789 to the Terror.

Between 1978, the date of the publication of Furet's *Penser la Révolution française*, and 1989, the liberal interpretation of the revolution, as opposed to the so-called democratic understanding, attained an almost hegemonic position. As Simon Schama and Stanley Hoffmann remarked in 1990, "historians, economists, political analysts . . . now see in the Terror not a disastrous detour but the very essence of the Revolution . . . The new liberalism repudiates the Revolution . . . because it sees the radical worm as present in the liberal fruit from the beginning . . . its common ground is anti-totalitarianism."⁴³ At the time of the Fall of the Berlin Wall, the question addressed to the Revolution became, as Schama and Hoffmann put it, "whether or not all modern revolutions that took their cue from the French paradigm were similarly tainted, driven along a depressingly well-trodden path from liberation to tyranny."⁴⁴



Pierre Chaunu, the quantitative historian-turned-counterrevolutionary evangelist, who would publish his revisionist book, *Le Grand Déclassement: A propos d'une commémoration* in 1989, compared the French Revolution to the Chinese Cultural Revolution, calling it "the Chernobyl of French history," something "dangerously cancerous," and stated that Jacobinism had in its chromosomes the genetic code for Lenin, Stalin, and Pol Pot. Chaunu claimed that it was he who coined the term "Franco-French genocide," covering the notion of "the greatest carnage perpetrated on the territory of France in fifteen centuries against a peasant population disarmed for ideological reasons by the utopian and thus cruel and bloody power of the most obscurantist of tyrannies, the first modern tyranny . . . which ex-

⁴³ Simon Schama and Stanley Hoffmann, "The French Revolution and its Commemoration in Retrospect," *Bulletin of the American Academy of Art and Sciences* 44, no. 3 (December 1990): 27–31.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 15.

hausted our people before inspiring virtually all the genocides, the holocausts, and the gulags of the last two centuries.”⁴⁵ Chaunu referred to the counterrevolution in the Vendée, and to support his work, he drew on the writings of one of his former students, Reynould Secher, the author, among other similar works, of *La Vendée-Vengé: le génocide franco-français*.⁴⁶

Le génocide franco-français was published in 1986, the year in which the German *Historikerstreit* started with Ernst Nolte’s article, “Die Vergangenheit, die nicht vergehen will,” (“The past that won’t go away”) in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*. The polemics triggered by Secher’s books and Chaunu’s interventions that denounced revolutionary violence, and that overinflated the numbers of the casualties (at the beginning of the polemics, Chaunu talked about 600,000 royalists killed, 500,000 in the Vendée alone) brought the debate dangerously—and probably intentionally—close to the Holocaust. Evoking the Holocaust in the debate about the French Revolution was almost unavoidable, once the central—although for quite some time subterranean—theme of the controversy was formulated around the issue of totalitarianism. The French debate that started in 1974 with the Gulag and its relevance for the history and historiography of the French Revolution, arrived in just a decade at extermination camps and genocide.

★

Only a year after the signing of the Helsinki Accords, when communist governments and party leaders—in the hope that the written word would never become flesh—agreed to observe human rights, Michnik wrote:

The dilemma of nineteenth-century leftist movements—“reform or revolution”—is not the dilemma of the Polish opposition. To believe in overthrowing the dictatorship of the Party by revolution and to consciously organize actions in pursuit of this goal is both unrealistic and dangerous. . . . It is dangerous to plan conspiratorial activities. . . . Revolutionary theories and conspiratorial practices can only serve the police, making mass hysteria and police provocation more likely. In my opinion an unceasing struggle for reform and evolution that seeks an expansion of civil liberties and human rights is the only course East European dissidents can take.⁴⁷

Samuel Moyn, the author of *The Last Utopia: Human Rights in History*, does not pay attention to Michnik’s new evolutionism. Still—without agreeing

⁴⁵ Pierre Chaunu, *Pour l'histoire* (Paris: Éditions Perrin, 1984), 171–72.

⁴⁶ In 2009, Secher would co-author *Le livre noir de la Révolution Française*, evoking the *Black Book of Communism*, an indictment of the Soviet Union and communism in general that was published to huge commercial success in France in 1997, under the editorship of Stéphane Courtois.

⁴⁷ Michnik, *Letters from Prison*, 142.

with his overextended assertion—it is worth looking at his argument about the new developments in the 1970s:

The drama of human rights, then, is that they emerged in the 1970s seemingly from nowhere . . . During the 1960s crisis of superpower order, other utopian visions prospered. They called for community at home, redeeming the United States from hollow consumerism, or “socialism with a human face” in the Soviet empire, or further liberation from a so-called neocolonialism in the third world. . . . Instead of implying colonial liberation and the creation of emancipated nations, human rights most often now meant protection against the state . . . Westerners left the dream of the revolution behind—both for themselves and the third world they once ruled—and adopted other tactics, envisioning an international law of human rights as the steward of utopian norms, and as the mechanism of their fulfillment. . . . There is no way to reckon with the recent emergence and contemporary power of human rights without focusing on their utopian dimension: the image of another, better world of dignity and respect that underlies their appeal, even when human rights seem to be about slow and piecemeal reform.⁴⁸

Unlike Michnik, whose name appears once, János Kis, the Hungarian political philosopher, and one of the most important theoreticians of the Eastern European democratic opposition under communism, is not mentioned by Moyn. In 1985, however, Kis published a samizdat book in Hungarian, *Do We Have Human Rights?*, also available in a French translation. The book was meant to be the philosophical grounding for a new, more consciously liberal opposition, with its open emphasis on human rights. For

⁴⁸ Samuel Moyn, *The Last Utopia: Human Rights in History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), 3–4. In his *Not Enough: Human Rights in an Unequal World*, published in 2018, Moyn accused members of the Central and Eastern European democratic opposition of having abandoned socialism for the sake of human rights: “Data show that until the late twentieth century, people were overwhelmingly more likely to utter the word *socialism* than the phrase *human rights* in every language until the one began to decrease and the other to spike precisely when Charter 77 was founded.” See *ibid.*, 2. “A parting of the ways between them, however, began under communist rule in the 1970s, when appearance of human rights movements helped put state socialism on trial... This gave Eastern Europe its prime significance in the global history of how human rights moved from an idiom of national social justice to a powerless companion of global neoliberalism.” *Ibid.*, 180. “[I]n the startling postcommunist wave in Eastern Europe, the most troubling relationship between human rights and neoliberalism occurred not under dictatorship but in the creation of freer societies.” *Ibid.*, 179. Moyn’s criticism disregards the fact that central redistribution was a defining element of authoritarian socialist regimes. Pluralism and democracy could have not been (re)established without eliminating central, one-party control of the economy, and without resurrecting the market.

the third, legalized edition of the book, in 2003, Kis wrote a new preface, recounting the story of an intellectual journey from neo-Marxism to social human rights, and finally to social liberalism.⁴⁹ The text helps identify the path that ultimately led to the roundtable discussions in 1989 and to the acceptance of the ideals of liberal democracy.

In 1972, János Kis, together with the philosophers György Márkus and György Bence, finished a book, *How is Critical Economics Possible?*—usually referred to as the *Überhaupt*—that would not be published until 1992.⁵⁰ This work, as Kis characterized it,

reached the very limit of the internal critique of Marxism. It showed that there was a deep divide between Marx's "philosophical intentions" (his ideas and the precepts he supported) on the one hand, and his sociological-economic views about socialism on the other . . . Our book showed that this institutional utopia [the withering away of the state, the elimination of the market and the strict dividing line between public and private spheres] prevents the realization of the "philosophical intentions"; instead, it supports a repressive and uniforming practice. The conclusion of the book was that he who identifies with Marx's humanist and autonomy-supporting principles should embrace one form or another of market economy and political pluralism. This conclusion opened the way for the acceptance of liberal democracy and capitalist private property . . . As the next step, I had to realize . . . that the critique of Marx could not stop at the refusal of the institutional utopia; the "philosophical intentions" should be revised as well.⁵¹

Embracing human rights provided a way out for socially engaged, ideologically well-versed critics of the communist regimes from the impasse of neo-Marxism after 1968. The language of human rights offered a discursive frame that allowed meaningful communication between disillusioned neo-Marxists from the East and liberal Western democrats, borrowing from Judith Shklar's political theory of "the liberalism of fear." After the demise of neo-Marxist critique of the Soviet system, human rights presented the platform and language for a proto(?)-liberal critique of communism. In Shklar's words, "[this kind of] liberalism has only one overriding aim: to secure the political conditions that are necessary for the exercise of personal freedom."⁵² This was the first, most decisive step for the former anti-capitalist and egalitarian members of the emerging new democratic opposi-

⁴⁹ János Kis, *Vannak-e emberi jogaink?* (Budapest: Stencil Kulturális Alapítvány, 2003).

⁵⁰ György Bence, János Kis and György Márkus, *Hogyan lehetséges kritikai gazdaságtan?* (Budapest: T-Twins Kiadó, 1992).

⁵¹ Kis, *Vannak-e emberi jogaink?* 11–12.

⁵² Shklar, "The Liberalism of Fear," 149.

tion—having abandoned the idea that existing socialism could be substantively reformed from the inside—to ultimately take the liberal democratic alternative seriously. The road to embracing the ideas and ideals of liberalism led via human rights.

But for former Marxists or neo-Marxists, who did not want to abandon the idea of social justice, it was difficult to give up the utopia of social equality. “[A]s a socialist, I am an opponent of capitalism. But as a socialist, I consider not capitalism but totalitarianism to be the greatest nightmare of our times, the gravest enemy of progress, democracy, and socialism,” wrote Michnik, another former Marxist.⁵³ For those like János Kis who did not want to leave their past unquestioned and unscrutinized, there was a need for an assurance that acceptance of liberalism, the logic of the market and the capitalist economy would not require them giving up some of their basic social convictions: the belief in the importance of the idea of the equality of human beings, besides the liberal promise of social justice. It did not prove easy to accept the assumptions of liberalism: in particular, its assertion that if, in the course of the complex web of social transactions, nobody’s basic human rights are violated, then the structure of distribution that is produced or reproduced should be considered a just outcome; if the transactions are legal, then the distribution—irrespective of its actual form—should be accepted as just.

In 1976, János Kis came across a piece by Ronald Dworkin in the February 5 issue of the *New York Review of Books*, entitled “The DeFunis Case: The Right to Go to Law School.” As Kis remembers, “I had not heard of Ronald Dworkin before, but [after having read the piece], I understood that Dworkin was a liberal and a principled supporter of human rights. In his understanding of liberalism, equality of human beings had a central role. He stated that his egalitarian understanding was the right interpretation of the liberal tradition; that it was possible to find a way to accommodate social justice in liberalism. The support of human rights does not exclude the possibility that the needs of distributive justice find a place in liberal policy.”⁵⁴

Human rights—contrary to Moyn’s assumption—are, obviously, not the final utopia. Moreover, human rights do not, in themselves, constitute a concise ideology; instead, as Kis’s recapitulation shows, they were instrumental for members of the Eastern and Central European democratic opposition in their quest for an alternative ideology after the obvious failure of neo-Marxism. The discovery of, and adherence to, human rights helped them in their journey to liberalism—in Kis’s case, social liberalism, not

⁵³ Adam Michnik, *The Church and the Left*, trans. David Ost (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 193.

⁵⁴ Kis, *Vannak-e ember jogaink?* 14–15.

neo-liberalism—the ideology that played a decisive role in the transition in Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary, and to a lesser extent in the other formerly communist countries.

Writing ten years after the political changes, the American political scientist Jeffrey Isaac concluded, “It is understandable why people like Kis, Konrád, and Michnik would gravitate toward liberalism, both because its rights-based philosophy offers a powerful antidote to the kind of collectivism long enforced by Communism, and because it is the only feasible macropolitical alternative to right-wing populism.”⁵⁵

“When judging the morality of an act,” writes Kis at the end of his intellectual recollection, “the judgment cannot be made by simply pointing at a social convention. . . . The answer should be based on substantive arguments . . . the arguments and counterarguments—and not the prevailing social practice—will decide at the end, which standpoint is the right one [in the case of moral issues].”⁵⁶

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“The 14th of July, 1989,” Simon Schama observed in his retrospective report about the commemoration of the bicentenary of the French Revolution, “fell neatly between the catastrophe on Tiananmen Square . . . and the deconstructions of Berlin.”⁵⁷

The reinterpretation of the history and historiography of the French Revolution before and at the time of the bicentenary did not remain unknown and unacknowledged in Central Europe. Polish, Romanian, and Hungarian historians traditionally had good personal and professional connections with their French colleagues, especially with historians in and around the *Annales*.⁵⁸ After the bicentenary, Michel Vovelle stated that there was a spectacular revisionist “explosion currently underway in the historiography of Eastern Europe, China, and Russia in revolt against their own particularly rigid vulgates. ‘We are Thermidorians,’ we are told by Chinese historians.”⁵⁹

Bronisław Baczko, who contributed three entries to Furet and Ozouf’s *A Critical Dictionary of the French Revolution*, published in 1989, was a Polish philosopher and historian, a former Marxist close to Leszek Kołakowski

⁵⁵ Jeffrey C. Isaac, “The Meanings of 1989,” in *The Revolutions of 1989*, ed. Vladimir Tismăneanu (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), 140.

⁵⁶ Kis, *Vannak-e emberi jogaink?* 18. Kis is—obviously—not a political realist.

⁵⁷ Schama and Hoffmann, “The French Revolution and Its Commemoration in Retrospect,” 11.

⁵⁸ In 1978, Krzysztof Pomian published a short report, “Impact of the *Annales* School in Eastern Europe,” *Review (Fernand Braudel Center)* 1, no. 3/4 (Winter/Spring 1978): 101–18.

⁵⁹ Michel Vovelle, “Reflections on the Revisionist Interpretation of the French Revolution,” *French Historical Studies* 61, no. 4 (Fall 1990): 754.

and Adam Schaff, and the author of a 1965 book on Rousseau. He was expelled from Poland in 1968, became a professor at the University in Geneva, and published a critically acclaimed work on the Thermidoreans, *Comment sortir de la Terreur: Thermidor et la Révolution*, in 1989. The first chapter of the book, *Robespierre-roi ou comment sortir de la Terreur*, had already been published in 1986, in *Le Débat*.

In the post-Thermidorian period, as if in a laboratory, Baczek analyzes the options available after the Reign of Terror: how is it possible to end the Terror, without finishing the Revolution? His argument, based on the historical material, is that the only way to end the Terror, to opt for reconciliation and leave revenge behind, is through pluralism—freedom of opinion, as opposed to the cult and fiction of unanimity. Baczek's argument reads—especially retrospectively—as if he had been writing for his Polish homeland on the eve of the roundtable talks.⁶⁰

Bronisław Geremek, who played a central role at the Polish roundtable discussions, was certainly aware of the ongoing, hegemonic neo-Tocquevillian approach to the French Revolution. Geremek first studied, then taught, at the Sorbonne in Paris, where he was the director of the Polish Cultural Center; he dealt with issues of French history, and kept close, friendly relationships with a large number of leading French historians. He most probably knew Baczek's works, including those on Thermidor, by the time the roundtable discussions began in Poland in February 1989, with a decisive influence on the subsequent process of transition in other former Soviet satellite countries, especially Hungary and Czechoslovakia.

Aleksander Smolar, one of the key figures of the democratic Polish émigré community in Paris, and the foreign spokesperson of the Workers' Defense Committee, KOR, had the following to say about Geremek and his views of moderation:

The moderates, very sensitive to the costs of possible revolutionary mobilization, rarely comment on the costs of continuity, of the lack of a clear boundary between

⁶⁰ On the first page of the English translation of Baczek's book, published by Cambridge University Press in 1994, the publisher inserted the following blurb: "The months that followed the fall of Robespierre in July 1794 mark not only the turning point in the history of the Revolution: 'Thermidor' is also a symbolic moment which came to haunt the subsequent revolutions of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. By this date the Terror as a system of power was discredited, and the engineers of the Terror were confronting the problem of how to dismantle it without repudiating the aims of the Revolution itself and its work. Professor Baczek analyses the Terror in detail through the political history of the French National Assembly, and looks at the broader issues of the political culture of Revolutionary France. He also uses the problem of the ending of the Terror to highlight contemporary problems in the break-up of the communist system."

the old and the new world, or of a revolutionary catharsis. Bronisław Geremek was one of the rare leaders of the moderates to comment publicly on the ambiguity of the strategy chosen. There was a certain political calculation in the conviction that the process of transformation allows us—step by step—to achieve what we needed. Utopias are not always able to control collective behavior. Political calculations never permit such control. Transition without severance from the past, without harm, weakens people's involvement and suppresses aspiration for renewal. . . . The victory of the revolution does not yield satisfaction, and the lack of revolutionary "catharsis" leads to collective disappointment.⁶¹

The Terror was on the mind of Polish intellectuals in the 1980s. In 1982, Andrzej Wajda produced his film *Danton*, based on the play, *l'Affaire Danton* by Stanisława Przybyszewska, starring Gérard Depardieu as Danton, and the Polish actor Wojciech Pszoniak as Robespierre. After the proclamation of martial law in Poland, Wajda was not able to shoot the film in the country, so he moved to Paris. However, during the last days of Solidarity, he introduced Depardieu to the real-life revolution in Poland:

The imposition of martial law on the 13th of December, and the ban on gatherings of more than three people, made production in our country impossible. . . . Before we began filming in Paris, while "Solidarity" was still functioning in Poland, Gérard Depardieu came to Warsaw for one day to see the revolution, and especially, to see its leaders at the moment just before the collapse of their undertaking. I wanted Depardieu to see the face of Revolution—inhumanly tired, with eyes wide open, suddenly falling asleep and never fully sleeping. Depardieu, guided by Krystyna Zachwatowicz, stood for a long moment in the hall of the Mazowsze Region headquarters with its endlessly milling crowds, where the history of those days was being created. . .⁶²

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When differentiating the phases of the Revolution (no longer perceived as a single "bloc"), Simon Schama—who published his own thick volume on the occasion of the bicentenary, in which he claimed that "in some depressingly unavoidable sense, violence was the Revolution itself . . . The Terror was merely 1789 with a higher body count"⁶³—did not separate 1789 from

⁶¹ Aleksander Smolar, "Revolutionary Spectacle and Peaceful Transition," *Social Research* 63, no. 2 (Summer 1996): 443. Geremek is quoted from his *Historyk w świecie polityki*, published in the Polish daily, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, January 9–10, 1993.

⁶² "Danton," Wajda.pl, accessed on April 8, 2011, <http://www.wajda.pl/en/filmy/film25.html>. François Furet reviewed the film for *Le Nouvel Observateur* in January 1983.

⁶³ Simon Schama, *Citizens: A Chronicle of the French Revolution* (New York: Knopf, 1989), xv and 447, respectively.

1793 any longer. Instead, he drew “a distinction between, if you like, the two Revolutions of 1789: if pressed, I’m in favor of the Revolution of the spring and the summer, and hostile to the Revolution of the autumn and winter.”⁶⁴ And in the most representative volume published on the occasion of the bicentenary, Furet asserted that the Terror “predated the dictatorship of Year II, the Republic, and the war with Europe. It had existed since the early summer of 1789.”⁶⁵

Reviewing Furet and Ozouf’s *Critical Dictionary*, Conor Cruise O’Brien took a step further:

Under the influence of Sieyès and Rousseau, the Rights of Man were turning into the Rights of Leviathan. . . . In its final form the Declaration embodies a series of rights, American-style, but it goes on to nullify these by two Articles written in a completely different spirit:

Article 3: “The source of all sovereignty resides essentially in the nation: no group, no individual may exercise authority not emanating expressly therefrom.”

Article 6: “Law is the expression of the general will; all citizens have the right to concur [sic] personally, or through their representatives in its formation—it must be the same for all, whether it protects or punishes . . .”

[A]s the Revolution developed between 1791 and 1794 . . . the only substantial articles respected in practice were the Rousseau-Sieyès ones. These were the ones that legitimized the Terror. They meant that if any person was accused in the all-powerful name of “the nation” or “the general will” by persons claiming to represent those formidable entities, and having the material capacity to enforce that claim, then that person was already as good as dead. The National Assembly, under the influence of Sieyès and Rousseau, had drafted the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen in such a way as to deprive such a person of any rights whatsoever. The Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen was in practice a mandate for Terror, as long as the French Revolution lasted. . . . Sieyès . . . [did] more than anyone else (after Rousseau) to bring re-total (totalitarianism, as we would say) into being.⁶⁶

“The cult of indivisibility—the insistence on unity, even on unanimity—was, I think,” proclaimed Schama, recapitulating the arguments in Furet and Ozouf’s *Critical Dictionary*, “simultaneously the source of the Revolution’s greatest rhetorical strength and the source of its greatest enduring institutional dilemmas.” He continued:

⁶⁴ Schama and Hoffmann, “The French Revolution and Its Commemoration in Retrospect,” 24.

⁶⁵ François Furet and Moan Ozouf, eds., *A Critical Dictionary of the French Revolution*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), 137.

⁶⁶ Conor Cruise O’Brien, “The Decline and Fall of the French Revolution,” *The New York Review of Books*, February 15, 1990.

Indeed, this constitutive aspect of the revolutionary culture is what now makes it so difficult for them to dissolve themselves back into pluralist democracies. . . . Political parties . . . were conceived of as things of darkness—as factions . . . A loyal opposition was a contradiction in terms. A politically independent executive . . . was depicted as a Trojan horse for counterrevolution. Instead, as Sieyès eloquently put it, and as it was incorporated in the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen, all power resides in the nation . . . a rather dangerous prescription . . . especially since it was subsequently constructed to mean that the national Assembly, the legislature itself, and the nation were coterminous . . . [T]his version offered an intensely concentrated form of sovereignty against which, by definition, there could be no appeal because one could in no coherent sense appeal against oneself . . .⁶⁷

The ongoing transition, changes, and negotiations in Eastern Europe that coincided with the bicentenary, as if they had in fact been triggered by it, did not remain unreflected on either side of the Atlantic. From the political failures and perceived short-sightedness of Rousseau and Sieyès, Schama drew a direct lesson for post-communist Eastern and Central Europe:

[I]t seems to me that the best prospects for the creation and consolidation of pluralist systems in the erstwhile communist regimes of central and eastern Europe lie in the degree to which they disobey, rather than adhere to, the French revolutionary precedent. . . . For successor regimes to work, they ought to be open, perhaps, to exactly the practices excluded by the French Revolution: party politics, loyal oppositions, very narrow and very precise rather than very broad and dangerously elastic definitions of treason, together with correspondingly stringent protection of individual rights. Such changes, moreover, seem to me to be created best not by violent interventions or moments of ecstatic communion but by horse-trading pragmatism, negotiations, and the natural process of division within a governing elite.⁶⁸

Criticism of the *Social Contract*, the “General Will,” Rousseau, and Sieyès have a long and venerable tradition, dating from Hegel’s chapter on “Absolute Freedom and Terror” in his *Phenomenology of Mind*. Following in Hegel’s footsteps, Jacob Talmon, in the first volume of his trilogy, *The Origins of Totalitarian Democracy*—published in the most heated period of the Cold War, in 1952—scrutinizes the French Revolution as if “refracted by the lens provided by the Russian Revolution and its aftermath, with the result that Robespierre became a Stalin, and finally even Rousseau turned—albeit indirectly—into an ideologist of the

⁶⁷ Schama and Hoffmann, “The French Revolution and its Commemoration in Retrospect,” 16 and 18–19, respectively.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 24.

Gulag.”⁶⁹ Still, the *Critical Dictionary* seems to be more nuanced than what Simon Schama’s summary, and especially Conor Cruise O’Brien’s review, imply. Bernard Manin’s entry on Rousseau in the *Dictionary* is far from a simplistic revisionist interpretation, while Keith M. Baker, who wrote the entry on Sieyès, made serious efforts to explain the differences between Rousseau and the Abbé.

Weighting Rousseau’s direct influence on the Terror, Manin writes: [W]hat about those writers who hold that, in broad, general terms, “the dictatorship of public safety” and the “revolutionary government” were consequences of Rousseau’s political theory, and especially of his conception of the social contract in which individuals alienate all their rights? They neglect one crucial fact: when the Jacobin leaders attempted to justify dictatorial rule to the Assembly, they *never* invoked the name of Rousseau or his concept of the social contract. In December 1793, in fact, Robespierre stated: “The theory of revolutionary government is as new as the revolution that produced it. Do not look for it in the books of political writers who did not foresee this revolution.” Of course the “revolutionary government” and the subordination of individual rights to the general will *could* have been justified with the aid of the *Social Contract*. The fact remains that they were not. . . . Robespierre is to be believed when he says that the revolutionary government did not originate in the books of the philosophers.⁷⁰

On the relationship between Rousseau’s and Sieyès’s views, Keith Baker explained: “In the *Social Contract* . . . Rousseau had decried representation as a feudal practice inconsistent with the exercise of the general will. . . . [R]eversing the Rousseauian opposition between representation and the general will, Sieyès insisted that national sovereignty could find expression in France only in the unity of the representative body: ‘the people can speak, can act only through its representatives.’”⁷¹ Baker continued:

[R]epresentatives chosen for their enlightenment could not make enlightened decisions unless they were free to deliberate in a manner unconstrained by the prior wills of those who had elected them. Thus slipping from the discourse of will to the discourse of reason. . . . “When a meeting is held, [according to Sieyès] it is for the purpose of deliberation, of finding out other people’s opinions, of taking advantage of their complementary enlightenment, of contrasting particular wills, of modifying them, of reconciling them, and finally of obtaining

⁶⁹ José Brunner, “From Rousseau to Totalitarian Democracy: The French Revolution in J. L. Talmon’s Historiography,” *History and Memory* 3, no. 1 (Spring, 1991): 60.

⁷⁰ Bernard Manin, “Rousseau,” in Furet and Ozouf, *Critical Dictionary*, 836–37, original italics.

⁷¹ Keith M. Baker, “Sieyès,” in Furet and Ozouf, *Critical Dictionary*, 319–20.

a decision supported by a plurality. . . . Beyond a shadow of a doubt, the deputies are in the National Assembly not to announce the already formed will of their direct constituents but to deliberate and vote freely in accordance with their *current* opinion.”⁷²

Baker argues that, according to Sieyès:

Danger lay not in the delegation of powers, but in their concentration in a single body—whether in a single representative body, or in the nation as a whole. To avoid the former, it was necessary to divide political functions precisely among a number of bodies. . . . The dispersion of powers upon which Sieyès now insisted not only divided legislative and executive functions; it separated the responsibility for proposing laws from that of deciding upon them, thereby preventing any exercise of “spontaneous wills” by a representative assembly. . . . But it was not enough to prevent the concentration of power in a representative body acting in the name of national sovereignty. It was also necessary, Sieyès now insisted, to repudiate an exaggerated notion of national sovereignty itself, a notion . . . sustained by mistaken (but clearly Rousseauian) conceptions of the social contract. . . . “The sovereignty of the people is not unlimited.”⁷³

Not being a historian of the French Revolution, it is not my task to assess and evaluate the historical adequacy of the works historians produced and published at the time of the bicentenary. From the perspective of the political transition in Eastern and Central Europe in 1989, however, it is important to note that despite the grave neo-Tocquevillian critique of the Terror—its roots, its protagonists, its afterlife, and its later adherents—contractualism was treated with more caution in serious scholarly analysis; the social contract, as a philosophical tool, was not relegated to the dustbin of tainted history.

In 1988, on the eve of the historical changes in Poland, Bronisław Baczko published an important paper in the supplement of the *Journal of Modern History*. The supplement was devoted to “Rethinking French Politics in 1788”: Baczko’s contribution was titled “The Social Contract of the French: Sieyès and Rousseau.” On the eve of the French Revolution, wrote Baczko, evoking “an original ‘social pact’ meant questioning the very legitimacy of the political regime.”⁷⁴ “How was it possible,” asks Baczko—and in light of subsequent developments immediately following the publication of the essay, it is difficult not to assume retrospectively that his words were also addressed to his learned compatriots—“to think in terms

⁷² Ibid., 320, original italics.

⁷³ Ibid., 322.

⁷⁴ Bronisław Baczko, “The Social Contract of the French: Sieyès and Rousseau,” *Journal of Modern History* 60 (Sep. 1988): S99.

of law of a revolution that was a rupture of the law? How could one envision democracy as the affirmation of both individual liberties and the sovereignty of the nation? How could the French be thought of both as an association of free and independent individuals and as a nation, the product of a long historical evolution? Sieyès's reflection on the 'social contract of the French in 1789' touched on all these questions. . . .⁷⁵ Sieyès advocated "a rigorous division of powers," as "an essential guarantee against the tendency of each power to surpass its legal limits and, above all, to encroach on individual liberties."⁷⁶

Baczko continued:

For Sieyès, liberty was exercised essentially within the civil order and its "greater or lesser sphere" was defined by the degree of independence acquired by the individual in order to realize his aspirations. The function and the duty of public power was to protect this independence from any hindrance. . . . Thus the notion of sovereignty must return to its proper confines. It was not unlimited—this fatal error derived from Rousseau's concept of a general will, one, indivisible, and inalienable, which could not err . . . The systems that preached such sovereignty . . . were in reality but "conceptions fit for the cloister, poor outlines for a total order [ré-totale] rather than for a public order [ré-publique], equally fatal to liberty and ruinous to the public and private domain alike."⁷⁷

This last quote used by Baczko was taken from Sieyès's speech on 2 Thermidor Year III, when under the experience of the Terror, he became even more suspicious of all forms of direct democracy and insincere appeals to the notion of sovereignty, the lack of "deliberation, of finding out other people's opinions, of taking advantage of their complementary enlightenment, of contrasting particular wills."⁷⁸ It seems that the French Revolu-

⁷⁵ Ibid., S100.

⁷⁶ Ibid., S121.

⁷⁷ Ibid., S122–23.

⁷⁸ Keith M. Baker, "Sieyès," in Furet and Ozouf, *Critical Dictionary*, 320. In Baczko's article, on pages S123–24, he inserted this long footnote: "One could cavil at some length on the distinction between 'ré-publique' and 'ré-totale,' which seems so curiously to anticipate currently fashionable opinions quick to bracket Rousseau and the Jacobins with totalitarianism. Let me state briefly that to make Rousseau the forefather of totalitarianism is, in my opinion, simply opting for a facile analysis of both the revolutionary period and totalitarianism, a political phenomenon peculiar to our own epoch. Sieyès's quarrel with Rousseau shows, quite to the contrary, the wealth of reflection on the experience of democracy and on the difficulties it presented in the revolutionary period. Problems raised by this debate—the interpretation of democracy as putting into practice both the sovereignty of the nation and the sovereignty of the law, as a political arena in which

tion, once again, played a salient role in the unfolding of a later revolution. In 1989, however, it was not the events of the Revolution that served as milestones, but the lessons derived from revisionist historiography that provided warnings to the participants.

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The issues evoked—"discourse of reason," "deliberation," "contrasting wills"—appear in János Kis's assessment of his journey to human rights and liberalism, along with "substantive arguments," meaning the "arguments and counter-arguments" employed when deciding upon the morality of an act. Kis mentioned Ronald Dworkin but did not cite the name of another major liberal thinker, John Rawls.

Over a decade after its publication in 1971, Rawls's *A Theory of Justice* began to exert serious influence on the worldview of Eastern and Central European intellectuals, who would go on to play an important role both in the immediate prehistory of the transition and at the roundtable talks in 1989–1990. Rawls's contractarianism was probably the first major philosophical work to attract the attention of critical intellectuals in the eastern part of Europe after they had abandoned any attempt to go back to Marx—especially the "early" Marx of the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*.

In *A Theory of Justice*, Rawls invokes complex philosophical machinery, like the "original position," in which "reasonable persons," "behind the veil of ignorance," and unaware of their future position in society, would come to an agreement as the "product of deliberation."⁷⁹ Rawls's "original position" is a hypothetical situation—which, as Rawls noted in response to his critics, including Dworkin, helps us to "work out what we now think"⁸⁰—and a concept first used, incidentally, by the Hungarian economist and game theorist John Harsanyi in a paper published in 1953. It is a thought experiment which presents an imagined scenario, where a group of people evaluate fairness from "behind the veil of ignorance," when "no one knows his place in society, his class position or social status, nor does anyone know his fortune in the distribution of natural assets."⁸¹

Rawls's "moral point of view," his "justice as fairness," in which "each person is to have an equal right to the most extensive basic liberty compati-

both individual liberties and the power of the nation-state are rooted, as a political regime that implies both the representative system and the participation of the citizens in public affairs—still have not been resolved by our political experience."

⁷⁹ See John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971), particularly Chapter III, "The Original Position."

⁸⁰ John Rawls, "Justice as Fairness: Political not Metaphysical," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 14, no. 3 (Summer 1985): 238.

⁸¹ Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 11.

ble with a similar liberty for others,”⁸² and where “social and economic inequalities are to be arranged so that they are both (a) reasonably expected to be to everyone’s advantage, and (b) attached to positions and offices open to all,”⁸³ obviously heralded an important milestone for the former neo-Marxists on their way to embracing liberalism. Rawls was highly influential—even on those who did not read him in Eastern and Central Europe—at the time of the political transition in 1989. With the help of Rawls, the liberal, non-radical, even non-revolutionary traditions of the French Revolution—including the hypothetical “social contract,” taken in a literal sense—gained currency and new meaning for the democratic opposition at the time when they were sitting down to the roundtables in Warsaw and Budapest, or devising future post-communist arrangements in Prague. Rawls’s text, as Bernard Williams characterized it, “might be called founding father political philosophy.”⁸⁴

At the moment of the transition, at the tables in Warsaw, Budapest, and Prague, it seemed as if Rawls’s hypothetical situation had been real; as if the complex philosophical machinery, the “original position,” should have been taken in a literal sense; as if, miraculously, the “original position” had come true. None of the participants knew the future; nobody knew his or her future class position or social status; they did not know which historical facts would count in the future. Sitting at the table, one could understandably imagine that—as Kis said—“substantive arguments” would count, that things would be decided on the basis of the strength of one’s reasoned and principled arguments; that the outcome—just as Rawls had forecast—would be decided in the course of deliberations, if “deliberation” should be understood as real, rational debate on the basis of actual, real-life, reasoned arguments. Rawls’s book imagines free and equal persons, who imagine themselves as free and equal, and decide about matters of

⁸² Ibid., 60.

⁸³ Ibid., 53. Moyn asserted, “In the history of distributive theory, John Rawls was the last Jacobin.” *Not Enough*, 40. Moyn, like Furet, went back to the Jacobins, but emphasized very different aspects of the Jacobin dictatorship: “[T]he French Revolution had not merely introduced human rights as a lingua franca of politics for modern states—it had also initiated the contentious struggle for social welfare. . . . The Jacobin state did the most in both theory and practice to set off a permanent debate about fair distribution in modern history and especially about the quandary of fulfilling sufficient provision of the good things in life without neglecting the establishment of a rough material equality of citizens.” Ibid., 13–14. “[T]he communist state that grew up on the territory of the old Russian Empire after World War I certainly claimed the Jacobin legacy for itself, but it was in Western welfare states through the 1960s and 1970s that the actual Jacobin legacy was strongest in socioeconomic affairs.” Ibid., 34.

⁸⁴ Williams, “The Liberalism of Fear,” 57.

justice on the basis of moral principles, in the frame of a “social contract” that will regulate their social and political relations.

It seemed that a historical miracle created a unique, unforeseen, unimagined historic opportunity. Individuals without elected political functions or positions, who not long ago had been in prison, without a job, or on society’s margins, were presented with the opportunity to design future social, political, and economic arrangements; to devise a social contract supported by the overwhelming majority of the society that was not (yet) split into factions. The moment offered an opportunity to reach back to the best, rational achievements of the Enlightenment, without the danger of bringing about “the dark side of the Enlightenment”; to create a caesura without a precarious rupture, without conjuring up the ghosts of the (French and Bolshevik) revolutions. Who would not have seized the opportunity offered by history—usually less than once in a lifetime—after the long decades of perceived totalitarian regimes?⁸⁵

Poland, Hungary, Romania, and Bulgaria had never had a liberal, democratic regime. It is not true—contrary to Timothy Garton Ash’s assertion—that “[t]here was no distinctively new project for the remaking of society in 1989.”⁸⁶ For these Central and Eastern European societies, the civilized, negotiated, nonviolent way of introducing the processes and institutions of liberal democracy under the rule of law, in place of the long decades and centuries of almost uninterrupted law of rule, was a new and unprecedented development.⁸⁷

Already in 1980, György Bence and János Kis published an important theoretical paper, based on the ideas of the Hungarian postwar political scientist István Bibó, which presented some of the key concepts that led to the negotiations in 1989. The title of the paper summed up the central

⁸⁵ Substantive arguments used by the intellectual members of the liberal democratic opposition, at the moment of the “original position,” when “no one knew his place in society, his class position or social status, nor did anyone know his fortune in the distribution of natural assets. . .” assured the basic outcome of the negotiations. What had been the liberals’ strength at the roundtables became a liability at the moment when everybody started to see, to figure out his place in the new world, his class position and social status in the new society, when, for members of the new elite, the primary aim became to spin the facts, to outfox others, to amass their fortune in the distribution of assets; in that world, under those circumstances, principled arguments did not count anymore.

⁸⁶ Garton Ash, “Conclusions,” 397.

⁸⁷ Timothy Garton Ash has still discovered something noteworthy in the experience of the Eastern and Central European countries, as in 2006, he started a multi-year research project that resulted in the publication of Adam Roberts and Timothy Garton Ash, eds., *Civil Resistance and Power Politics: The Experience of Non-violent Action from Gandhi to the Present* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

ideas of their political blueprint: "Limiting Revolution, Constrained Pluralism, Conditional Sovereignty."⁸⁸ In the course of the negotiations, with the dramatic and quick changes to the political situation, two of these cautious political aims obviously became outdated. However, the virtue of self-constraint, the intention and success of limiting the revolution, served as a guarantee of the transition's peaceful nature.

Bence and Kis were obviously influenced by Michnik's idea of "New Evolutionism"—by its conscious and calculated self-constraint, its adherence to peaceful means, and its refusal of the revolutionary tradition. In light of these ideas, in the atmosphere of the newly hegemonic neo-Tocquevillian interpretation of the French Revolution, it was understandable that the leading members of the democratic anti-communist oppositions took a firm stance against retroactive political justice following the fall of the communist regimes. Figures like Václav Havel, Adam Michnik, Bronisław Geremek, Tadeusz Mazowiecki, György Konrád, and János Kis opposed legal, criminalizing solutions to issues of transitional justice. Having learnt from the French example and its imitations, they were well aware of the possible dangers of revolutionary justice, which had the potential to lead to terror.

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Post Scriptum

"The French Revolution was so often brandished as a property deed by the Bolsheviks that no one last fall [1989] laid claim to the heritage in Prague, Budapest, or Warsaw. Jacobinism," claimed Furet, cost the French Revolution "its ancestral place in the recent reunion of Europe with liberty."⁸⁹ Furet saw the changes in Central Europe more as counterrevolutions, and even Michel Vovelle, the leader of the remaining French Marxist historians of the Revolution, wondered whether the events in the GDR, Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and Romania "could truly be characterized as revolutionary, without taking into account their contents, which sometimes seem to have more affinity with restoration."⁹⁰

In the fall of 1993, following the electoral victory of the two communist successor parties in Poland, Adam Michnik published a short essay in *Gazeta Wyborcza* on the "Velvet Restoration." In it, he argued that

⁸⁸ Ferenc Donáth and János Kenedi, eds., *Bibó Emlékkönyv* (Budapest: samizdat edition, 1980), 292–306.

⁸⁹ Quoted in Steven Laurence Kaplan, *Farewell, Revolution: The Historians' Feud, France, 1789/1989* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995), 125.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 169.

Every revolution—even a velvet one—has its own logic. It releases expectations and hopes that it can never satisfy. Therefore, it has to radicalize its own language, devour its own children, eliminate the moderates from its ranks, decree successive “accelerations,” lustrations, purges. The revolution is forever unfinished. That is why it causes frustration and bitterness. Somebody must be held responsible for the fact that manna has not fallen from heaven. The revolution finds the guilty ones. First the people of the old regime, then their defenders, and finally its own leaders.⁹¹

Michnik’s text recalls Baczko’s *Comment sortir de la terreur*: “Thermidor is the key moment when the Revolution must carry the weight of its past and admit that it will not keep its initial promises. It is above all the moment when the protagonists proclaim that they wish neither to recommence its history nor remake its experience. Thermidor is the moment when the revolutionaries retain only one desire, are motivated by only one wish: to end, finally, the Revolution.”⁹² As Baczko recalls, the Thermidorean Convention decreed that the Place de la Révolution should bear the name of the Place de la Concorde.

In Poland, Hungary, Slovakia, and Romania, the former communists came back to power in the middle of the 1990s after a short period of hibernation. “But the restoration,” reminds Michnik, “like revolution, inevitably brings disappointment.” He continues:

just as the revolution failed to keep its promises earlier, the restoration [does] not keep them later; the peace and order of the good old days [do] not return . . . The mark of restoration is its sterility. Sterility of government, lack of ideas, lack of courage, intellectual ossification, cynicism, and opportunism . . . Even though it is bad, the logic of the restoration is better, after all, than the logic of a Jacobin-Bolshevik purge, revenge, or guillotine. A consistent restoration is gray with boredom: a consistent revolution is red with blood.⁹³

The situation in Hungary, after the Hungarian Parliament passed the country’s new Constitution (on April 18, 2011), should caution one to take both Furet’s and Vovelle’s characterizations seriously. The first line of the new Constitution calls on God to bless the Hungarians; the text restores the Hungarian Holy Crown as the source of constitutional legitimacy and sovereignty; and it enshrines Christianity as the unifying force of the na-

⁹¹ Adam Michnik, “Post-Communism: A Search for Meaning: The Velvet Restoration,” trans. Elżbieta Matynia, *Transitions Online*, March 22, 1996, <http://www.tol.org/client/article/2225-post-communism-a-search-for-meaning-the-velvet-restoration.html>.

⁹² Bronisław Baczko, *Ending the Terror: The French Revolution after Robespierre*, trans. Michel Petheram (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1994), 260.

⁹³ Michnik, “The Velvet Restoration.”

tion. The Constitution explicitly abandons the fiction of legal continuity—the basis of the negotiated transition in 1989—when it states in the Preamble: “We date the restoration of our country’s self-determination, lost on the nineteenth day of March 1944, from the second day of May 1990, when the first freely elected organ of popular representation was formed. We shall consider this date to be the beginning of our country’s new democracy and constitutional order.” By claiming that Hungary had not been a sovereign state between March 19, 1944, when German troops occupied Hungary, and the first session of the post-communist Parliament in 1990, the right-wing government presently in power in Hungary has allowed the country to evade any historical, political, or moral responsibility for, among other things, the deportation and murder of close to 500,000 Jews, the post-World War II deportation of the German and Slovak minorities, the internment of hundreds of thousands in the 1950s, the collectivization campaign, the crushing of the 1956 Revolution, the post-revolutionary retribution, the invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968. . . . We Hungarians are innocent and sinless victims of history done by others.

What is taking place in Hungary now is, without a doubt, a counter-revolution, but it is definitively not the continuation of what was started in 1989. What has been taking place is rather the opposite: an attempt to discard the achievements of the 1989 peaceful revolution; to eradicate everything that was accomplished by the heroic act of not experimenting with dangerous ideas. The unfulfilled promises of both the revolution and the short-lived restoration could lead—and not only in Hungary—to a counter-revolution. “After all, the liberation from dictatorship brought freedom and happiness only to a few. The majority, left in poverty and despair, did not enjoy the fruits of victory. According to that majority [as we know today, seduced by populist demagoguery] the revolution was betrayed by the ‘moderates’—the majority has to liberate itself once again.”⁹⁴

Perhaps Bronisław Geremek was right when he said: “Transition without severance from the past, without harm, weakens people’s involvement and suppresses aspiration for renewal.”⁹⁵ The Hungarian case lacked a proper revolution that creates visible and tangible rupture, followed by revolutionary terror, or as Michnik put it, “a Jacobin period, in which at the beginning, the king’s head is demanded, then people want his entourage and then they move against anyone who had spoken out against reprisals. It is a road without an end. If you punish a hundred, there will always be a thousand more.”⁹⁶ Perhaps people really need to experience their

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Geremek is quoted from his “Historyk w świecie polityki,” published in the Polish daily, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, January 9–10, 1993.

⁹⁶ Quoted in Smolar, “Revolutionary Spectacle,” 443.

strength and their sovereignty; otherwise they do not recognize their revolution, making them ready to submit to the counterrevolution, “to a savior, who liquidating both camps [the ‘moderates’ of the restoration and the ‘extremists’ who demand revolutionary justice], reaches for his armor and the language of the diktat.”⁹⁷ Velvet revolutions, avoiding the terror—the virtue of not inventing anything, and not succumbing to revolutionary justice—do not come for free; nations seem obliged to pay a high price for a peaceful transition, for the fiction of legal continuity. “Revolutions grow old quite quickly. They age badly . . . The French Revolution did not age any worse than all the other revolutions which followed it and were inspired by it.”⁹⁸

The farcical and tragic developments twenty years later, the counter-revolution, the so-called “revolution in the voting booth” in 2010 in Hungary, do not invalidate the accomplishments of 1989: the peaceful revolution, the lack of violence, the lives that were not lost, the unique opportunity to make use of peace, democracy, the rule of law—1989 brought these rare, or never-before experienced, chances to live a dignified life.



Historians, including myself—as I mentioned at the beginning of this essay—are tempted to overdetermine incidents of the past, in order to prove “that ‘what actually happened’ did so of necessity,” as Furet noted.⁹⁹ As I have learned from him while working on this text, Michnik read Baczkó’s book on Thermidor only after the fact, and after the Fall, in the middle of the 1990s. He heard from me—in the process of writing this essay—for the first time about Baczkó’s article on Sieyès, which he has never read. János Kis read Rawls in the middle of the 1970s, but before 1989, as he told me, he did not have the opportunity to discuss *A Theory of Justice* with anyone, even with philosophers in Hungary.

I do not really think, however, that these revelations invalidate my argument. Bernard Williams distinguished the audience, those people who actually read a text, from “the person purportedly addressed, the listener . . . Rawls has an answer to this: that those founding, indeed Pilgrim, fathers, the listeners, are the audience’s own Kantian selves.”¹⁰⁰ As Baczkó wrote with reference to Sieyès: “I am not concerned with tracing Rousseau’s influence on Sieyès. The ‘hunt for influences’ that is the province of a certain school of the history of ideas is remarkable for an intellectual ste-

⁹⁷ Michnik, “The Velvet Restoration.”

⁹⁸ Baczkó, *Ending the Terror*, 260.

⁹⁹ Furet, *Interpreting the French Revolution*, 19.

¹⁰⁰ Williams, “The Liberalism of Fear,” 56–57.

rility that no longer needs to be demonstrated. All the ‘publicists’ of 1789 worked on terrain that Rousseau had plowed in depth . . . The epoch disposed of a particularly rich store of common ideas.”¹⁰¹ Or as Keynes claimed in his *General Theory*: “The ideas of economists and political philosophers, both when they are right and when they are wrong, are more powerful than is commonly understood. . . . I am sure that the power of vested interests is greatly exaggerated compared with the gradual encroachment of ideas. Not indeed, immediately, but after a certain interval.”¹⁰²

¹⁰¹ Baczko, “The Social Contract,” 99

¹⁰² J. M. Keynes, *The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money* (London: Macmillan, 1939), 383.

CHAPTER 6

The Rule of Law after the Short Twentieth Century: Launching a Global Career^{*}

Martin Krygier

In the last twenty to thirty years, rule of law as panacea has become extraordinarily popular. Today, rule of law is an international “hurrah” term, on the lips of every political leader, development agency, and world body, offered as a support for economic growth, democracy, human rights, and much else. “RoL” promotion is booming. Lots of people and organizations are contracted to work on it, lots of money is spent on it, lots of academics study it. It wasn’t always so. And even though the term is everywhere, it’s hard to say that we see more rule of law in the world nowadays. All sorts of thugs and murderers are not now, just as they were not then, constrained by law, whatever regimes may claim. Notwithstanding heaps of rule of law promotion, this seems unlikely to change. But my story in this chapter is about concepts and ideology, not practice, though ideology is of course a form of practice, and it affects other forms of practice as well.

Recall Lenin for a moment. He was, after all, leader of a post-authoritarian transition (to totalitarianism, as it happens, but the point remains). The rule of law was not high on his agenda, and he was not embarrassed about that fact. He said—accurately—that his government was “based directly upon force and unrestricted by any laws. The revolutionary

^{*} This chapter draws upon my contribution to the 2009 Princeton University conference “The Global 1989: A New Generation,” and is a slightly modified and updated version of a chapter originally published in Richard Nobles and David Schiff, eds., *Law, Society and Community: Socio-Legal Essays in Honour of Roger Cotterrell* (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2014), 327–46. Earlier versions of this chapter were presented to panels at the Law and Society Conference, Boston, 2013; the Institute for Global Law and Policy Conference, Harvard University, 2013; and the International Association for Philosophy of Law and Social Philosophy Conference, Belo Horizonte, 2013. I am grateful to the participants in those panels, and also to Deval Desai, Samuel Moyn, and Kenneth Winston for their comments. It draws upon research supported under Australian Research Council’s *Discovery Projects* funding scheme (project number DP110101029).

dictatorship of the proletariat is rule won and maintained by the use of violence by the proletariat against the bourgeoisie, rule that is unrestricted by any laws.”¹ And it was not hard for such views to find support. In the old days, if British patriots were to extol the rule of law, they could easily find themselves drowning in choruses deriding bourgeois ideology, at least in academic circles. One such academic, E. P. Thompson, who had idiosyncratically combined Marxism with his own patriotism, wrote as recently as the mid-1970s that the rule of law is a “cultural achievement of universal significance.” He was not thanked for this by his erstwhile comrades.² And critical legal studies, a movement of the 1970s and 1980s, spent much of its time denouncing the allegedly false consciousness-inducing ideology of the rule of law.

Things are different now. If any evidence for this is needed, I offer just one piece which speaks volumes: out of a litany of encomia to the rule of law collected by Brian Tamanaha, perhaps Robert Mugabe’s is the most poignant. He explains that “[o]nly a government that subjects itself to the rule of law has any moral right to demand of its citizens obedience to the rule of law.”³ If hypocrisy is the tribute vice pays to virtue, then this is tribute indeed. Since I think that the rule of law, understood in a particular but historically far from exotic way, is a good thing—precious, even—I should be happy about its newfound popularity.⁴ But it does lead to a question about the contingent nature of the enterprise in which so many of us are engaged: why now? The answer can’t simply be that the rule of law is valuable or important, as so many now say; for it is not obvious that it is any more important today than when Lenin was happy to abuse it without apology. What has changed? Perhaps we’ve just become smarter, but it is hard to say why that would be. What made us so? And again: why now?

A third possibility is that we’ve had such success in global rule of law promotion, and in turn, that it has been so beneficial in so many ways to so many countries, that we’re merely facing obvious, undeniable facts. But, in light of the evidence, that is not altogether plausible either; indeed, some might say it’s more risible than plausible.

Another suggestion might be that some experts, among them institutional economists of a neoliberal persuasion, hit upon the idea that the rule

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works, Volume 28: July 1918–March 1919*, ed. Jim Riordan (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1974), 236.

² E. P. Thompson, *Whigs and Hunters: The Origin of the Black Act* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977), 265.

³ Quoted in B. Z. Tamanaha, *On the Rule of Law: History, Politics, Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 2.

⁴ Martin Krygier, “Four Puzzles about the Rule of Law: Why, What, Where? And Who Cares?” *Nomos* 50 (2011): 64–104.

of law was important, convinced international agencies of it, and the rest followed. That has to be part of the truth, because we can point to examples. Economists have, without doubt, appropriated and boosted the fashion for the term worldwide over the past twenty to thirty years. But experts have ideas all the time. Most of them share the fate Marx misguidedly anticipated for his and Engels's first manuscript together, *The German Ideology*: subject to nothing but "the gnawing criticism of the mice."⁵ Why were ideas about the rule of law taken up—by men, not mice, and not only economists—with such enthusiasm, and all over the globe? Why indeed did economists' ideas about law, which could be and have been expressed in terms other than "the rule of law," come to be so? What made the concept so widely available, so ready-to-hand at that time and not another?

My own hunches are, first, that it is no surprise that the rule of law began its global career so late in the last century. There was no room for it earlier, because of ideological features which shaped and distinguished that century and, specifically, its core, the "short twentieth century" that Eric Hobsbawm identified as beginning in 1914 and ending in 1991 (East-Central Europeans would argue plausibly for 1989, and indeed that date is more relevant to the concerns of this chapter).⁶ Secondly, the rule of law began its global rhetorical apprenticeship, alongside "human rights" and for many of the same reasons, as disillusion set in with the short century's ideologically driven "grand narratives," though before anyone realized one of them was about to disappear. Third, the career of the rule of law began its ever-upward trajectory after, and because of, the ignominious and complete debacle of one of the short century's two protagonists. This, fourthly, was grist to the mills of neoliberal economists and other enthusiasts, whose ideas about the significance of law came to be expressed in terms of the rule of law, added to its global charm, boosted its ratings sky-high, and changed the terms and the tone in which it was discussed. Whether, finally, this career will survive the complicating transformations that have occurred since are matters of conjecture, in which I will indulge tentatively and briefly.

At the moment, I have more confidence that such questions are worth asking than that I have answers worth giving. Even so, they should be asked, because when a concept becomes fashionable enough to set agendas, it tends to drive out alternatives. We think within those agendas, rather than about them. Even if we find ourselves in a conceptual hole, it is hard

⁵ Karl Marx, "Preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*," in *Karl Marx and Frederick Engels: Selected Works* (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1951), 1:330.

⁶ Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century, 1914–1991* (London: Michael Joseph, 1994).

to ask whether we might stop digging, or dig somewhere else, or for something else, or in some other way. We exhaust our energies trying to dig ever better, rather than ask why we got into the hole in the first place. Such questions are not always easy to answer, however, since the rise and fall of concepts is often overdetermined, while evidence that would allow us confidently to assign causes is typically underwhelming. It is rare that any one thing explains the career of a concept, and unless one is attached to some sort of vulgar materialism or idealism, it's not always even clear what might count as an explanation. My claims, therefore, are modest: I try here only to suggest a few plausible linkages—neither necessary nor sufficient conditions, perhaps only “elective affinities”—between what I postulate as effective, and what we see as effects.

The short twentieth century

Shortly after the French Revolution, the French philosopher Joseph de Maistre observed that “for a long time we did not fully understand the revolution of which we were witnesses; for a long time, we took it to be an event. We were mistaken; it was an epoch.”⁷ The same could be said of the Russian Revolution. At the very least, it spawned an epoch that lasted until 1989, though its triumphal moments were long behind it by then. The end of European communism, and with it, in turn, even the dream of world communism, was itself not just an event but, as many thinkers have observed, the end of that epoch.

There was a lot that was special about that century, short though it may have been. One was that the “conceptual geography” of the globe became framed as a battle between states seen as the creatures, incarnations, and bearers of particular, programmatic ideas with global claims.⁸ This is rare. The United States, after their revolutionary inception, developed ideas with which they later became identified, and the brief life of revolutionary France was associated with novel ideas that certainly infected subsequent history. However, no other great state had ever before been destroyed and reconstructed with the manifest intent of realizing the secular intellectual and revolutionary project of one thinker. The Soviet Union began as just such a state.

Certainly, the Bolsheviks' European neighbors and opponents in 1917 were nothing like that: no one invented them, and while there were texts and ideologies, most came well after, or at any rate during, the events;

⁷ Joseph de Maistre, “Discours à Mme la marquise de Costa,” in *Œuvres*, vol. 2 (Paris: A. Vaton, 1851), 76–77.

⁸ Tony Judt, “The Rediscovery of Central Europe,” *Daedalus* 119, no. 1 (1990): 23–54, at 25.

moreover, few were canonical. In many ways, there are parallels with a later invention, Nazism: also the thought of one man; also an unprecedented and defining part of the epoch; also a response to many of its dislocations, especially the War; also revolutionary and totalitarian in its ambitions; also attractive to many intellectuals in the 1930s; and also responsible for almost unimaginable levels and types of “violence, hubris, ruthlessness, and human sacrifices.”⁹ Communism and fascism were both ideological regimes and, as François Furet has stressed, we don’t have many of those.¹⁰ Arguably—and Furet does so argue—these two were the first. Whether the concepts that defined the geopolitical rivalries of the century would have been ideological, had communism and Nazism not been there, is anyone’s guess. For while contention seems inescapable from human affairs, *ideological* contention is not the norm.

There were of course immense differences, intellectual and moral, between Marx and Hitler, between their roles in the movements that followed them, and between the mythologies and narratives that inspired their followers: world emancipation in one, world domination in the other. The movements they inspired, however, both excelled in human catastrophe. The epoch could have ended in a competition between them both, and indeed could have been won by either. Had that been the case, I doubt we would be talking about the rule of law today. As it happened, however, Nazi Germany was defeated, and only one of these novel ideocratic creations remained. Its influence, as actor, model, and counter-model, was profound. The postwar world was framed by the bipolar contest—over ideas as much as territories—between the liberal-capitalist “West,” its allies, subalterns, vassals, and dependents on the one hand, and the communist—first Soviet, then Soviet and Chinese—powers with their attendants, acolytes, emulators, and victims, on the other. The rest of the world was an arena of competition: between countries, of course, but more distinctively between frames and views of life, including political, economic, and social life, that were in intense competition and diametrically opposed. As Hobsbawm has noted,

The world that went to pieces at the end of the 1980s was the world shaped by the Russian Revolution of 1917. We have all been marked by it, for instance, inasmuch as we got used to thinking of the modern industrial economy in terms of binary opposites, “capitalism” and “socialism” as alternatives mutually excluding one another, the one being identified with economies organized on the model of the USSR, the other with all the rest.¹¹

⁹ Vladimir Tismaneanu, *The Devil in History: Communism, Fascism, and Some Lessons of the Twentieth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), i.

¹⁰ François Furet, *The Passing of an Illusion: The Idea of Communism in the Twentieth Century*, trans. Deborah Furet (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999).

¹¹ Hobsbawm, *The Age of Extremes*, 4.

That's one—Marxist—way of putting it, with economics as the core. Another—political—way is to contrast ideological one-party dictatorship with pluralist liberal democracy. Either way, the geopolitical map of the short century turns out the same, and radically different from what it was and what it has become. Much of the century was dominated, then, by a stark and sometimes dramatic ideological, political, economic, and often military contest between exemplars of antithetical and contending social/economic/political regimes for life. Their conflicts were holistically conceived as being between incompatible *systems* of social, political, and economic organization and operation, and not—as traditionally conceived—as occurring from time to time between entities of more or less the same sort, even if differently adorned and hostile to one another.

Law had no part in the glorifying myths and narratives of communism. At best, it was viewed as a piece of (transitional) social technology of subordinate significance in the life of a society, treated always instrumentally, frequently with suspicion or contempt; alternatively, it was often simply ignored. The rule of law, in particular, had no part in what Hobsbawm describes as “the special house-style [communism] imposed on its successors.”¹² On the other side, by contrast, law and the rule of law were vaunted, sometimes even considered national treasures; but there were hefty barriers to export, not open to globalizing ambitions, since “we” only owned a part of things, and no one thought that was going to change in a hurry. On occasion, and especially in the US's backyard or territories where it sought influence, tentative experiments in law and development (L&D) occurred. However, given the competitive struggling and ideological posturing that dominated the world, the rule of law could never be part of any international lingua franca.¹³ L&D was not even a hint of what was to come. As David Trubek has noted,

The L&D movement had a brief and intense life. Of course, by today's standards it was never a major enterprise. It was focused on a few countries in Latin America and Africa. Projects were small and short lived, and finances were limited. . . . [B]y the middle of the 1970s there was disillusion in the academy, foundation interest declined, and the official aid agencies showed no interest in moving into legal reform. So, for the moment, the L&D movement seemed to have run out of steam.¹⁴

¹² *Ibid.*, 56.

¹³ See David M. Trubek and Alvaro Santos, eds., *The New Law and Economic Development: A Critical Appraisal* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

¹⁴ Trubek, David, “The ‘Rule of Law’ in Development Assistance: Past, Present, and Future,” in *The New Law and Economic Development: A Critical Appraisal*, ed. David M. Trubek and Alvaro Santos (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 78.

Somehow L&D came, after some twenty years, to be replaced by RoL. And that was something else. As Trubek again observes,

Today, the enterprise of law reform in developing and transition countries is big business, far eclipsing even the wildest dreams of the L&D pioneers. Aid agencies like the World Bank, which once focused primarily on building roads and dams and getting macroeconomic variables right, now proclaim the importance of the “rule of law” (ROL) and spend billions to reform the legal systems of countries as different as Albania and Argentina, Bangladesh and Bolivia.¹⁵

Apolitical politics

Why did this begin to change, as I believe it did, in what were—but were not yet recognized to be—the waning years of the short century? There is an economic story, which Trubek and his colleagues tell well, that focuses on the development of institutional and neoliberal economists’ ideas of that period, their political incarnations in Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan in the late 1970s, and their later influence on world mega-development institutions, such as the World Bank and the IMF, in the 1990s.¹⁶ The back story, though without reference to law, is part of an intriguing new book on 1979 as the harbinger of things to come.¹⁷ That is clearly a key part of the story of the take-up of the rule of law, and later perhaps a dominant part. However, I want to stress another strand that started elsewhere, had more to do with politics than economics, so far as I can tell began earlier (or, at least, not later), and has received less attention.

Here I develop some intriguing claims of the Yale law professor Samuel Moyn, in his remarkable *The Last Utopia: Human Rights in History*.¹⁸ Moyn’s work is part intellectual history, part political lament. Both are relevant to the career of the rule of law, though in different ways. I will begin with the history, and later return to the lament. Moyn has nothing to say about the rule of law, but his argument about the genesis and dissemination of “human rights” in the 1970s has profound implications for the

¹⁵ Ibid., 81.

¹⁶ See Trubek and Santos, *The New Law and Economic Development*; David Kennedy, *The Dark Side of Virtue: Reassessing International Humanitarianism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004); Stephan Haggard, Andrew MacIntyre and Lydia Tiede, “The Rule of Law and Economic Development,” *Annual Review of Political Science* 11 (2008): 205–34.

¹⁷ Christian Caryl, *Strange Rebels: 1979 and the Birth of the 21st Century* (New York: Basic Books, 2013).

¹⁸ Samuel Moyn, *The Last Utopia: Human Rights in History* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010).

career of the former concept. The core of his argument is that most of the current purported genealogies of human rights, which have them emerging from old precedents such as the American or French Revolutions, or more recent world-historical calamities such as the Holocaust, are false. The international omnipresence of “human rights” is a recent thing, and its sources are not those we usually identify. He argues that, while the concept of human rights was certainly around for a while, and had precedents and bursts of documentary crystallization after World War II, it really only gained its current international state-questioning character, ubiquity, salience, and rhetorical space-filling dominance over other moral languages in the 1970s. It was, Moyn argues, a recent story spawned at a particular moment, largely by the writings of Russian and East-Central European dissidents, Latin American revolutionaries, and others, who were seeking a moral language for an ideologically exhausted and politically blocked time.

Moyn’s discussion of why human rights were found so appealing to dissidents in the 1970s seems extremely plausible to me, and to a great (or even greater) extent, extendable to the later embrace of the rule of law as well. My borrowings from Moyn do not depend on one of his central and most controversial claims: the alleged lack of real precedent for the international vogue for human rights before the 1970s. Whatever the case with that claim, the rule of law was not new coin, and it is no part of my argument that the concept was “invented” in the very recent past.¹⁹ However, notwithstanding the old lineage of the concept, before the 1990s, it simply wasn’t there as the universal panacea it has since become. It had local roles and traditional partisans, but not the cosmopolitan reach it has come to enjoy today.

Moyn’s basic claim about “human rights as a powerful transnational ideal and movement” is that:

they emerged in the 1970s seemingly from nowhere. . . . Yet, within one decade, human rights would begin to be invoked across the developed world and by many more ordinary people than ever before. Instead of implying colonial liberation and the creation of emancipated nations, human rights most often now meant individual protection against the state . . . Westerners left the dream of revolution behind—both for themselves and for the Third World they had once ruled—and adopted other tactics, envisioning an international law of human rights as the steward of utopian norms, and as the mechanism of their fulfillment. . . . The moral world had changed.²⁰

¹⁹ See Martin Krygier, “Rule of Law (and Rechtsstaat),” in *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences*, 2nd ed., ed. James D. Wright, et al. (Oxford: Elsevier, 2015), volume 20: 780–87.

²⁰ Moyn, *The Last Utopia*, 7 and 3–4.

Why such a turn? Even if there are more precedents for the internationalization of human rights than Moyn allows, it seems incontestable that the 1970s saw a dramatic quickening and spread of recourse to them.²¹ Moyn attributes this to the exhaustion of—and a consequent turn away from—the grand ideological alternatives that had framed political choices for much of the century. Communism had discredited itself internally for a huge number of reasons, and its international shame was evident at least after its brutal crushing of the revolutions in Hungary in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968. These showed that politics were unavailable in any real, “normal” sense in communist states, while they simultaneously de-legitimized utopian political transformative projects as an ideal. However, neither anti-communist dissidents in Russia and East-Central Europe, nor similarly politically blocked dissenters in Latin America, were enthusiasts for replacing one of the two grand projects on offer with the other, or indeed with *an* other. They were not, at this stage, enthusiasts for capitalism either (though this later came to change for many of them), and many of them had had enough of the *scale and ambition* of either alternative. Moreover, throughout the West, the 1960s—with the war in Vietnam, the rise of the New Left, the West-wide student movement, the Rolling Stones—had also shaken ideological confidence there. It was common for critics to concede “moral equivalence” to the two camps, to cast a plague on both houses. This fed the appeal of rights:

The best general explanation for the origins of this social movement and common discourse around rights remains the collapse of other, prior utopias, both state-based and internationalist. . . . In this atmosphere, an internationalism revolving around individual rights surged, and it did so because it was defined as a pure alternative in an age of ideological betrayal and political collapse.²²

East-Central European dissidents preached “apolitical politics,” the “power of the powerless,” and civil society. They abhorred conventional politics in general, and in any event there was no place for them in communist states. Moreover, having felt the consequences, they abhorred utopian politics in particular. Better to secure some minimal basic moral rights that apply to everyone, than to pursue contentious fantasies of social, economic, and political regeneration that had been seen only to generate catastrophe. Distrusting political utopias and politics more generally, they sought a morally untainted alternative. Human rights seemed, Moyn suggests, to fit the bill.

²¹ See also Samuel Moyn, “Substance, Scale, and Salience: The Recent Historiography of Human Rights,” *Annual Review of Law and Social Science* 8 (2012): 123–40.

²² Moyn, *The Last Utopia*, 8.

In such a context, Moyn argues, human rights had many attractions. First, they seemed more modest, involving “smaller and more manageable moral acts”²³ than the utopias they replaced: “Human rights emerged as a minimalist, hardy utopia that could survive in a harsh climate . . . the winter of discontent that swept the West [in the early 1970s] also resulted in the mistrust of more maximal plans for transformation—especially revolutions but also programmatic endeavors of any kind.”²⁴ Second, they could combine modest aspiration with universal appeal; human rights were everyone’s rights, no one should be denied them, and no one could claim exemption from their demands. Third, they were grounded in the purity of moral self-evidence, not the dirt of (in any event, unavailable) political maneuvering: “The disavowal of earlier utopias took place in part out of the aspiration to achieve through a moral critique of politics the sense of a pure cause that had once been sought in politics itself.”²⁵ Finally, they offered an ecumenical language; “it also mattered that the language proved to be highly coalitional and ecumenical in providing a lingua franca for diverse voices.”²⁶ As Andrei Sakharov, whom Moyn quotes, summed it up in 1978: “The ideology of human rights . . . serve[s] as a foothold for those who do not wish to be aligned with theoretical intricacies and dogmas, and who have tired of the abundance of ideologies, none of which have brought mankind simple human happiness.”²⁷

Moyn’s is a rich book, and human rights a larger and more captivating ideal than the rule of law. The ambitions are greater, the sweep, the beyond-the-state grounding and reach, all go beyond the rule of law. As such, one cannot simply say, “quite so, and so too—with a slight delay—for the rule of law.” He is, after all, not interested in the connections between human rights and the rule of law, but with international law, and that is a different if overlapping story. However, as a subaltern attendant to Moyn’s story, the launch of the global career of the rule of law—concept, not achievement—is illuminated by his argument. It might indeed turn out to be the next chapter in his story. For so much that Moyn says about the appeal of human rights in a time of ideological exhaustion applies to the revving-up stage of the next universalistic cab off the rank: the junior relative (and increasingly presumed vehicle) of human rights, the rule of law. Even more than human rights, the rule of law can seem to be a minimalist

²³ *Ibid.*, 147.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 121.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 171.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 144.

²⁷ Quoted in *ibid.*, 174; for the original, see Andrei Sakharov, “The Human Rights Movement in the USSR and Eastern Europe: Its Goals, Significance, and Difficulties,” *Dialogue*, January 1979.

goal, applicable everywhere and to everyone, independent of political ideology or system. It is certainly not the stuff of popular utopian fantasy. All it has seemed to involve is the demand that regimes respect legal undertakings they have already and explicitly given. It also incarnates the displacement of politics by judicial assessment that Moyn sees as the crucial shift from earlier talk of rights to contemporary human rights talk. Indeed it seems utterly prosaic, much more so than human rights, and perhaps for that very reason more appealing to those whom it has come to attract.

It is true that the rule of law has little of the morally compelling aura of human rights; its appeal is instrumental, not fundamental. Indeed, that might be why it is talked about more by technocrats, diplomats, and professional promoters than by ordinary folk, though this might even seem an advantage to some among its constituencies, particularly official ones. While Moyn does not say this, one could even more easily say of the rule of law what he says of human rights: “human rights could break through . . . because the ideological climate was ripe for claims to make a difference not through political vision but by transcending politics.”²⁸ Though this takes us into a later part of our story, after the short twentieth century had ended and the global career of the rule of law was well under way, Balakrishnan Rajagopal has argued that one reason the UN took up the rule of law was that:

The rule of law came to be seen, in many ways, as a convenient substitute for human rights. Unlike human rights, the rule of law does not promise the achievement of any substantive social, political, or cultural goal. It is much more empty of content and capable of being interpreted in many diverse, sometimes contradictory, ways. The human rights discourse is a discourse of social transformation, and even emancipation, whereas the rule of law discourse does not have that ambition and may be seen as inherently conservative.²⁹

Moreover, not only did the rule of law share many of the sources of attractiveness of human rights—if in a minor key—it also became a vehicle for them. One key, if subsidiary, theme in Moyn’s account is the extent to which this human rights discourse became legalized; it was not just an international movement, but a movement of international law. Also novel was the extent to which law more generally was entrusted with the delivery of human rights. Moyn notes the extent to which, in the late 1960s, early Soviet dissidents chose to pursue a “legalist” approach, insisting on the terms of the law—which in reality mattered to no one—in order to high-

²⁸ Moyn, *The Last Utopia*, 213.

²⁹ Balakrishnan Rajagopal, “Invoking the Rule of Law in Post-Conflict Peacebuilding: A Critical Examination,” *William and Mary Law Review* 49, no. 3 (2008): 1347–76, at 1359.

light “the failure of the regime to abide by its own enacted rules.”³⁰ In the 1970s, Václav Havel also insisted on a strategy of “legalism,” and dissidents took both inspiration and tactical support from a landmark event, the Helsinki Accords of 1975. The Accords traded recognition by the West of postwar boundaries that the Soviet Union had secured by force, for recognition of human rights by the East, recognition that Henry Kissinger memorably said, could be written “in Swahili for all I care.”³¹ However, what to many anti-communists seemed a poor deal—since boundaries were tangible, unlike human rights commitments—proved to confound expectations: the boundaries evaporated in 1991 and the commitments provided a focus for increasingly embarrassing Soviet and East-Central European dissent.

The point has been nicely captured in a recent memoir by a later visitor to East-Central Europe, Marci Shore, seeking to recapture the distinctive ethos of the Czech dissident movement Charter 77:

In Prague that summer of 1993 I was trying to understand Charter 77—what it was and what it was not. It was not anti-Marxist. It appealed for neither the restoration of capitalism nor the introduction of multiple political parties. It proposed no alternative political system. It called on the government only to take seriously its own laws. Everyone told me this; it was a kind of refrain. I was interested in democratic politics, but in Czechoslovakia the dissidents had been interested in “antipolitics.” The Helsinki Accords had inspired a language that was not only post-Marxist but also postpolitical. Inside politics, the dissidents had believed, it was impossible to have clean hands. Political opposition would always imply something shared with the regime it opposed. The language of Helsinki was a language of human rights, transcendent of communist—or capitalist—ideology.³²

Dissidents developed a legal strategy of insisting that laws, which had never counted for much in their experience or their parts of the world, be taken seriously and solemnly, *as if* the regimes that were harassing them could be assumed to heed the rule of law, in order that they might be forced to do so. With conventional political participation being unattractive and unavailable, law offered a kind of authority and impersonal appeal, immediately at the level of rhetoric, and perhaps in an unforeseeable future in fact. It was a powerful strategy by that time, deeply uncomfortable for floundering, delegitimized regimes. Some of those regimes, such as Poland’s, des-

³⁰ Moyn, *The Last Utopia*, 134.

³¹ Jussi M. Hanhimäki, “‘They Can Write it in Swahili’: Kissinger, the Soviets, and the Helsinki Accords, 1973–75,” *Journal of Transatlantic Studies* 1 (2003): 37–58.

³² Marci Shore, *The Taste of Ashes: The Afterlife of Totalitarianism in Eastern Europe* (New York: Crown Publishers, 2013), 26–27.

perately launched a strategy of legitimation through law—including new courts, an Ombudsman, a Constitutional Tribunal, a Tribunal of State—in their last decade, since all other forms of legitimacy had disappeared.³³ Mikhail Gorbachev, too, a lawyer like Lenin but with somewhat different views about law, sought in the flickering moments of his rule to construct a “state based on the rule of law,” but it was too late.³⁴ And when to everyone’s surprise, European communist states collapsed like dominoes in and after 1989, one of the central demands of the unprepared victors of those unprepared revolutions was the rule of law. Trubek is illuminating here. He identifies, as the first of two strands for “the rediscovery of law in the development community,” what he calls “‘the project of democracy,’ [that] came out of the human rights movement of the 1970s and 1980s.” Of that strand he writes:

For our story, the most important move was the recognition that purely international approaches to human rights protection were insufficient without strong counterparts in domestic law. Events such as the Helsinki process drew attention to the lack of protection for human rights in domestic institutions. The human rights movement began to look at domestic institutions, championing the creation of constitutional guarantees, judicial review, greater judicial independence, and “access to justice.” This path naturally led to ideas about the construction of “the rule of law.” It was understood that that project would require substantial effort both to dismantle older systems that had buttressed authoritarian rule and to create the new culture and institutions needed to protect democratic freedoms.³⁵

Back to the future

In 1992, the rule of law became an item on the agenda of the United Nations General Assembly for the first time. 2012 marked the first time it was the exclusive subject of a “high-level meeting” of the Assembly, which declared, in its “Declaration on the Rule of Law at the National and International Levels,” that human rights, the rule of law, and democracy are inter-linked and mutually reinforcing, and that they belong to the universal and indivisible core values and principles of the United Nations (even though it

³³ See Adam Czarnota, “Marxism, Ideology, and Law,” in *Marxism and Communism: Posthumous Reflections on Politics, Society, and Law*, ed. Martin Krygier (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1994), esp. 190–5.

³⁴ Frances Foster-Simons, “Towards a More Perfect Union? The ‘Restructuring’ of Soviet Legislation,” *Stanford Journal of International Law* 25, no. 2 (1989): 331–73.

³⁵ Trubek, “The ‘Rule of Law’ in Development Assistance,” 84.

had only explicitly begun to notice the place of the rule of law in this pantheon twenty years before). Again, Jeremy Farrall notes:

the most striking transformation of the rule of law from curiosity to familiar friend is the term's increasing appearance in the Council's resolutions. During the Cold War, the rule of law featured in Security Council resolutions a mere handful of times. By contrast, in the nine years from the beginning of 1998 until the end of 2006, the phrase "rule of law" appeared in no fewer than sixty-nine Council resolutions.³⁶

The reasons are not hard to find. Many people have noted, Agnès Hurwitz among them, that it was "only after the end of the cold war that the rule of law became the big tent for social, economic, and political change generally—the perceived answer to competing pressures for democratization, globalization, privatization, urbanization, and decentralization."³⁷ Why so?

My conjecture is that the ground was ploughed, and the seeds sown, by the factors that Moyn has argued mobilized the language of human rights. The subsequent collapse of communism fertilized the soil, but it also opened the field up to others to sow, graft, and harvest. Out of all this came a curious hybrid, born of political disillusion but nurtured in a time of apparent geopolitical triumph and evangelical confidence ("the end of history"), some of it political (democracy and the rule of law), some of it economic (the triumph of the market), and some of it later fearful (the war on terror). The result was a product available for many different consumers, with varying tastes and uses, some of them discordant with others; but not every discordance within the "big tent" was immediately, or later, noted. This led to continuity and rapid advance, but also significant transformations in the career of the concept. On the one hand, the existing distrust of untested utopian experiments was augmented when communism collapsed so dramatically, without even having been pushed. Had no other factors been involved, aside from that collapse, it might have led to an incremental increase in attention to law.

However, when one contestant collapsed, the other was left standing. This radically altered the balance between the two protagonists of the short century: it now seemed clear that one had won, in practice, in real time. No more was heard of moral equivalence, or indeed any equivalence at all. One side was out the window; the other came confidently through the door. The task, many came to believe, was now to move rapidly into the future by

³⁶ Jeremy Matam Farrall, *United Nations Sanctions and the Rule of Law* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 22.

³⁷ Agnès Hurwitz, "Towards Enhanced Legitimacy of Rule of Law Programs in Multidimensional Peace Operations," in *Rule of Law Programs in Peace Operations*, ed. Agnès Hurwitz and Kaysie Studdard (New York: Peace Academy, 2005), 4.

emulating what were taken to be the lessons of the Western past. The result of this reconfiguration was a windfall for the career of the rule of law, but also an amplification of the ambitions of its partisans. It emerged out of politics and in modesty, but was promoted in economics and, for a time, in glory. These are not always easy traits to combine, and so it has proved.

“No adjectives”

In one sense, then, the trajectory begins with the insistent *modesty* of initial demands for what was to follow communist collapse, in keeping with Moyn’s thesis. The spectacular collapse of European communism in 1989 puzzled many observers, as it spawned a phenomenon virtually without precedent: a cascade of revolutions which, while having truly world-historical practical and ideological implications, put the rule of law central among their programmatic themes and demands. Apart from the American Revolution, no other world-historical revolution can be similarly characterized. Clearly, something significant—indeed unprecedented—was going on. However, the rhetoric of these world-historical transformations was restrained in the extreme. First of all: “No Experiments!”³⁸ That has never been the call of any other revolution. No new ideas seemed to emerge, and this was not for lack of thought, but deliberately. Many observers saw events in this way. Timothy Garton Ash, for example, couldn’t decide whether to call them “refolutions” or “revolutions,” since the collapse of one country after another and the end of a political, economic and social system is clearly something more than ordinary reform, but it lacked many of the dramatic trappings of revolutions, among them new ideas.³⁹ And, Romania apart, there was very little blood. Debates followed about whether it had generated any new ideas at all.⁴⁰

This combination of centrality, novelty, and modesty was all played out in relation to law and the rule of law. On the one hand, law was unusually central to the rhetoric of the dissidents-turned-statesmen. As András Sajó and Andrew Arato have observed,

From many points of view the post-Communist systems, at least in the first two years of their existence, are strongly legalistic. . . . [T]he East European transitions did not only aim at constitutionalism and the rule of law, but also the process of change itself which, in all countries with the exception of Romania and the Soviet Union, took a constitutional form. This paradoxically involved

³⁸ Originally used by Konrad Adenauer to describe the process of German reconstruction after defeat in the Second World War.

³⁹ Timothy Garton Ash, *We the People* (Cambridge: Granta Books, 1990), 20.

⁴⁰ See, for instance, István Rév’s chapter in this volume.

taking the existing Communist constitutions seriously for the first time (an old proposal of the dissidents!) and using their own mechanisms to produce constitutions (supposedly transitional ones) with an entirely new spirit.⁴¹

This centrality of law is unusual of revolutions, particularly in this part of the world. But also unusual for revolutionaries was that the rule of law they sought should be “without adjectives”: not bourgeois, socialist, or whatever; just law. Rule of law and constitution-building was largely considered a work of emulation, not invention. As Garton Ash noted at the time:

in politics they are all saying: There is no “socialist democracy,” there is only democracy. And by democracy they mean multi-party, parliamentary democracy as practiced in contemporary Western, Northern, and Southern Europe. They are all saying: There is no “socialist legality,” there is only legality. And by that they mean the rule of law, guaranteed by the constitutionally anchored independence of the judiciary.⁴²

It has turned out to be a more complicated undertaking than that, but that is certainly how many viewed it at the time.⁴³

The End of History

One reason it all seemed so cut-and-dried is that, while post-communist dissidents shared distrust for political utopia with their former selves and predecessors, they were no longer even-handed about it. In a moment, it was all over, and one side had won: decisively and without striking a blow. European communism simply dropped away, in a manner unpredicted and widely unlamented. This, in itself, was a fascinating and singular achievement: its rise was without precedent, and so was its fall. Not coincidentally, the role of intellectuals in framing alternative social imaginaries has all but vanished with it—especially in former communist countries, and at least for now. That, as Judt observes, “is in large measure because Lenin and his heirs poisoned the well.”⁴⁴

⁴¹ András Sajó and Andrew Arato, “Editors’ Introduction,” *Law and Policy* 13, no. 2 (1991): 101–5, at 101.

⁴² Timothy Garton Ash, “Eastern Europe: The Year of Truth,” *New York Review of Books*, February 15, 1990: 21.

⁴³ Krygier and Czarnota, *The Rule of Law after Communism*; Adam Czarnota, Martin Krygier and Wojciech Sadurski, eds., *Rethinking the Rule of Law after Communism: Constitutionalism, Dealing with the Past, and the Rule of Law* (Budapest–New York: CEU Press, 2005).

⁴⁴ Tony Judt, *Reappraisals: Reflections on the Forgotten Twentieth Century* (New York: Penguin, 2008), 124.

So now it wasn't even-handed ideological exhaustion. Communism was out, and rule of law was in; part of, for a time, a confident triumphal package for export. There were both negative and positive aspects to this. For many opponents of communism, the characteristic absence of the rule of law under communist regimes, the patent "instrumentalization" of law by rulers or its irrelevance to their exercise of power, were seen as central to the ways in which communist despots ruled. That was a negative lesson: a good regime doesn't behave that way. And for the surprised participants in, and inheritors of, that annus mirabilis—who eschewed experiments, boasting that their revolution was "self-limiting" (Poland), "negotiated," "velvet" (Czechoslovakia), indeed "legal" (Hungary), and that they would establish the rule of law, a "law-governed state," or other canonical rephrasings—quickly included in new constitutions, there were positive lessons apparently readily available. They were to be found either in the pre-communist past, or in the present of all those "normal" countries, as the West used to be described, where constitutions were thought to set the rules for the exercise of power, and citizens could petition courts if they thought their governors had broken the rules; where politicians were supposed to be constrained by law; and more generally and fundamentally, where law *counted* in social life, and where people thought it could, should, and would so count.⁴⁵ And so law, and the rule of law, came to have unusual significance in the non-utopian utopias of post-communist reformers. Given these circumstances, it is probably no accident that law and ideas of the rule of law were more central to the aftermath of the revolutions against communism than elsewhere.

As such, what occurred in 1989 was not just a continuation of the "modesty" born of failed experiments, which had already been learnt in the 1970s, but a novel linking of it with a renewed belief in the resilience—for some, the unique appropriateness—of Western liberal capitalist arrangements. This was all the more true because the absence of the rule of law had pervaded all domains of what Ernest Gellner called the "Caesaro-Papist-Mammonist"⁴⁶ regimes of the Soviet Bloc. Thus it could be, and was, promoted as a cure for pathologies in all three domains. Not everyone spoke of the end of history, but no one had much clue about alternatives, so the ideological context had radically changed. There was, it clearly appeared, a winner—the liberal, capitalist West—and a clear loser—Soviet

⁴⁵ On late-communist and immediately post-communist ideas of the rule of law and "normal countries," see Martin Krygier, "Marxism and the Rule of Law: Reflections after the Collapse of Communism," *Law and Social Inquiry* 15 (1990): 633–63, at 636–37.

⁴⁶ Ernest Gellner, *Conditions of Liberty: Civil Society and Its Rivals* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1994), 4.

communism—and it was not obvious for a time that there was anything else. The rule of law was touted as a Western achievement, and it became a Western export industry; a good time to have come up with the Washington Consensus, described by Randall Peerenboom and Bojan Bugarič as “a universal one-size-fits-all approach to development based on imitation of ‘international best practices’—i.e. the historically contingent and surprisingly diverse institutions, rules, and practices of primarily high-income countries in North America and Western Europe.”⁴⁷

Economists Turn to Law

I mentioned earlier that Trubek had identified two strands to the rise of the rule of law in the 1990s. One was the “project of democracy.” The other, which came from elsewhere, had different goals, and no humility at all, was what he calls “the project of markets and the discovery of institutions”:

This approach stressed export-led growth, free markets, privatization, and foreign investment as the keys to growth. To pursue these goals, it was necessary to create all the institutions of a market economy in former command economies and remove restrictions on markets in *dirigiste* economies such as those in many Latin American countries.⁴⁸

With its roots in the institutional economics of the 1960s and the Hayekian transformations of the 1980s, the new economic approach placed great stress on law, property rights, and security of contract guaranteed by law, and more general economic predictability, also said to flow from law. The tone was very different from that of the disillusioned “apolitical” politicians of the 1970s. These people had a doctrine to sell.

I won’t explore this economic turn here, partly from lack of competence and partly because it has been well done elsewhere.⁴⁹ I merely stress that its priorities and tone were very different—not necessarily inconsistent, but different—from those of the political and ideological skeptics who, in the 1980s and 1990s, had turned to law. Securing property rights is not the same as taming despotism. You might want both, but typically those interested in one had less to say about the other. Nevertheless, as often happens in matters of rhetorical fashion, they fastened onto the same slogan, and pushed it along together. Trubek is again useful:

⁴⁷ Randall Peerenboom and Bojan Bugarič, “The Emerging Post Washington, Post Beijing Consensus: Prospects and Pitfalls,” Paper presented at Law and Society Conference, Boston, June 2013, 2.

⁴⁸ Trubek, “The ‘Rule of Law’ in Development Assistance,” 84.

⁴⁹ See, for instance, Trubek and Santos, *The New Law and Economic Development*.

Once the economic development agencies realized that the neoliberal turn involved positive intervention to create the institutional conditions for markets, development agencies were committed to investing in legal reform. They found their concerns overlapped with those of the proponents of human rights and democracy. For both, the rule of law was a common goal. While the project of democracy and the project of markets seem very different, they both identified “the rule of law” as an essential step toward their objectives.⁵⁰

The Global ‘89

This was a combination pregnant with significance in relation to law. On the one hand, the revolutions of that year galvanized unusually explicit and strong hopes for the transformative significance of the rule of law, while on the other, the attention was deliberately more imitative than pathbreaking in self-conception and ambition. The assumption was that the future would be nothing fancy, but would be modelled on legal arrangements that have already been tried and that had *worked*, usually somewhere else. Rather than indulge in novel legal experiments, still less attempt to do away with law, or for that matter do something new with it, the task was one of reverse engineering a successful achievement, and then constructing and reconstructing the sources of its success. Moreover, given the dichotomous terms in which the short twentieth century was understood, the collapse of one of its protagonists was taken by many observers to mean not merely the signal victory of the other, but that the sources of its superiority would be found in institutions and practices that were the reverse image of those that had failed: in place of maximal state intervention, minimal state intervention; in place of no property rights, untouchably secure ones; and so on. This was a great boost to the neoliberal “take” on Western achievements, for some time squeezing out other interpretations of a more mixed, complex, and variable sort, of possible relations between states, laws, and civil societies. For some time, and to some people, the notion that there were indispensable “virtuous circles,” rather than stark oppositions between states and civil societies, or property-securing rule of law on the one hand, and regulatory interventions, on the other, could only seem to be squeamish temporizing.⁵¹

You might think that, if one were to take these limited ambitions seriously, there would be little of more than local interest to be expected from the transformations that occurred in East-Central Europe: all emulation, no invention, no demonstration. And yet these concept importers became concept exemplars, and even exporters, before very long. What began as

⁵⁰ Trubek, “The ‘Rule of Law’ in Development Assistance,” 84.

⁵¹ Martin Krygier, “Virtuous Circles: Antipodean Reflections on Power, Institutions, and Civil Society,” *East European Politics and Societies* 11, no. 1 (1997): 36-88.

regional fixes quickly became experimental sites and provocations for international recipes, because it seemed to have been established that, as core elements of the model system, they should be core elements of every other system. So although the so-called post-communist “region” was where much of this emulatory practice started, this new vogue for the rule of law did not stop there. The apparent victory—economic, political, ideological—in East-Central Europe and the former Soviet Union of one of the two contenders in the contests of the previous century reverberated in both the real and conceptual geography of the world.

Within a relatively short time, demands for the rule of law echoed throughout the world, particularly among people and agencies concerned with so-called “transitional” societies. This rather hopeful label ultimately came to include many different sorts of societies, at different stages of development, with different orders of problems, and only three unifying features: there was hitherto little rule of law within them; the “transitional” moment seemed to be one in which this might be changed; and rule of law promoters were thought to know the ways to change it. Thus was born the international rule of law promotion industry.⁵² As Venelin Ganey has observed, “[t]hroughout the 1990s Eastern Europe was arguably the region most intensely studied and discussed by the community of scholars interested in the spread of the Rule of Law around the world.”⁵³ And, as Veronica Taylor has noted,

Legal reform as a component of multilateral or bilateral development assistance is not new. However, the fall of the Berlin Wall signaled an emphatic “turn to law” in multilateral and bilateral flows of finance, development aid and technical assistance to developing and transition economies. Beginning in Central and Eastern Europe but expanding rapidly to other regions, this “new” wave of legal reform was funded at dramatically higher levels than in previous decades. As a result, over the last two decades, the creation, diffusion and enforcement of law and legal institutions has become both a set of free-standing goals and a tool-kit for achieving other policy aims, such as resolving armed conflict, entrenching electoral democracy, restructuring public administration, igniting economic growth, strengthening market mechanisms or improving public health and education.⁵⁴

⁵² As to which, see Amichai Magen, “The Rule of Law and its Promotion Abroad: Three Problems of Scope,” *Stanford Journal of International Law* 45, no. 1 (2009): 51–116.

⁵³ Venelin I. Ganey, “The Rule of Law as an Institutionalized Wager: Constitutions, Courts and Transformative Social Dynamics in Eastern Europe,” *Hague Journal of the Rule of Law* 1, no. 2 (2009): 263–83, at 263.

⁵⁴ Veronica L. Taylor, “Frequently Asked Questions About Rule of Law Assistance (And Why Better Answers Matter),” *Hague Journal on the Rule of Law* 1, no. 1 (2009): 46–52, at 46–47.

The collapse of European communism thus crucially altered the conceptual space, creating room for attempts to generate the rule of law and constructing conditions for their epidemic spread. It also made rule of law seem attractive in ways it never had. It led first to a *quicken*ing of interest, because there were suddenly plenty of new states or newly liberated states that lacked the rule of law, according to *any* definition, for which these questions were not academic, but urgent; and there was at the same time space, lack of ideological competition and hindrance, and a sense that this was a global turning point. Second, a new sense of *salience*: it came to be said worldwide that these are central issues, not just good things or local achievements, since the main proponent of a contrary view had just disappeared. Third, *spread*. There was no obstacle to the spread of the good news, and no obvious alternative. The time to propagate our models of the rule of law, markets, and democracy had apparently arrived throughout the world.

Moyn's lament

As I mentioned earlier, Moyn did not simply argue a historical case; his book has a powerful polemical thrust as well. He claims that, having been taken up as a non-political, anti-utopian, moral minimum, human rights have come to fill the space they sought to empty. Increasingly, he argues, the language of human rights has become a maximalist language, which squeezes out other ways of imagining problems—ways of conceiving what they are, what they might be, and how they might be dealt with, other than in terms of the language of rights: “their substitution of plausible morality for failed politics may have come at a price.”⁵⁵ Moyn further notes:

After all, they [human rights] have done far more to transform the terrain of idealism than they have the world itself. . . . Though they were born as an alternative to grand political missions—or even as a moral criticism of politics—human rights . . . were forced, slowly but surely, to assume the very maximalism they triumphed by avoiding.⁵⁶

And yet, as always in a minor key, similar things might be observed about the rule of law. In the hands of its international promoters, rule of law does at least sometimes grow rhetorically into maximal versions.

There was always something falsely, perhaps disingenuously, technicized and depoliticized about the rule of law story, as Moyn suggests of

⁵⁵ Moyn, *The Last Utopia*, 175.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 9.

human rights. It was manifest in what Thomas Carothers has called a “breathhtakingly mechanistic approach” based on the notion that “a country achieves the rule of law by reshaping its key institutions to match those of countries that are considered to have the rule of law.”⁵⁷ This legalistic stuff didn’t look like transformative projects: just fixing obvious wrongs, even mere technical problems, on the basis of solutions obvious to those experienced with the rule of law in its secure homes. The story was a condescending one, but in the first years after 1989, there was a certain plausibility to it. What else was there? Wasn’t the West a success? Wasn’t it true that the rule of law was associated with that success? Wasn’t it also true that there were experts in law who knew how to identify, pack, and transport its ingredients? And wouldn’t everyone benefit? Thus, and not too slowly, it came to be that, as Charles T. Call observes:

Among a plethora of development and security agencies, a new “rule of law consensus” has emerged. This consensus consists of two elements: (1) the belief that the rule of law is essential to virtually every Western liberal foreign policy goal—human rights, democracy, economic and political stability, international security from terrorist and other transnational threats, and transnational free trade and investment; and (2) the belief that international interventions, be they through money, people, or ideas, must include a rule-of-law component.⁵⁸

Nevertheless, transplantation of the rule of law is always an intensely social and political—not merely technical—project. Whatever forms and methods are chosen inevitably embody social and political aims, and have social and political conditions of success and failure; the effort sometimes causes social and political harm, and it always produces winners and losers.⁵⁹ Indeed, though it is commonly viewed as a kind of technology transfer, I doubt that a great deal of the rule of law is well understood in terms of technological metaphors at all, since it so involves culture, social practices, traditions, and ways of life. But even if it makes sense to think of it in such terms, the rule of law is what Stephen Holmes has called an “interaction technology,” not a production technology. That means we have to know a lot about the inter-actors and the ways they interact in particular societies,

⁵⁷ Thomas Carothers, “The Problem of Knowledge,” in *Promoting the Rule of Law Abroad*, ed. Thomas Carothers (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2006), 21.

⁵⁸ Charles T. Call, “Introduction,” in *Constructing Justice and Security after War*, ed. Charles T. Call (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2007), 4.

⁵⁹ Krygier, “Four Puzzles about the Rule of Law”; Mark Fathi Massoud, *Law’s Fragile State: Colonial, Authoritarian, and Humanitarian Legacies in Sudan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013); Kennedy, *The Dark Side of Virtue*.

and, for a host of reasons, rule of law promoters know much less *about the actors* than they do about what they themselves bring to them.⁶⁰ This is true of attempts to generate new law in general, and all the more true of the rule of law, which involves achieving certain ideals for law, not simply installing an institutional package. This should have been obvious, if not in the first moments of enthusiasm, then pretty early on.⁶¹ In moments where there seemed to be only one game in town, however, it was easy to forget this and imagine “there is no alternative.” Fortunately or unfortunately, that is not a stable state. The thoughts of Francis Fukuyama notwithstanding, it soon became clear that there are alternatives, for better and for worse, and other games to play.

Towards no one’s world⁶²

The rule of law came, then, to be internationally fashionable at one particular moment: when it *seemed* that the major ideological competition that framed our lives was over, and there was a winner. It was associated with that victory: part of the triumphal machinery, which many came to think a key part. Unfortunately for the confidence of those manning the program, history did not end in 1989, even if the short century did. If there is any significance to the ideological stories I have sketched here, the international career of the rule of law must be affected by this. For it is all a lot more complicated now, and everyone knows it. The afterglow of the short century was even shorter. September 11, 2001 and what followed, including the lengthy, costly, painful, and inconclusive wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, challenged both the confidence of the West and the cheerful logic that had propelled the transplantation of the rule of law. Perhaps the rule of law is not the obvious good that the West has claimed. Perhaps it is not part of an economic/technical package of the sort that rule of law promoters have suggested. Perhaps there are other ways to it, uncounatenanced by Westerners and compatible with antithetical beliefs and practices. Perhaps we need to reconfigure our understanding of the rule of law to encompass (as it has come to do) goals and means quite different from those envisaged in the

⁶⁰ Martin Krygier, “Approaching the Rule of Law,” in *The Rule of Law in Afghanistan: Missing in Inaction*, ed. Whit Mason (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 15–34.

⁶¹ Martin Krygier, “Transitional Questions about the Rule of Law: Why, What, and How?” *East Central Europe/L’Europe du Centre-Est: Eine wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift* 28, no. 1 (2001): 1–34.

⁶² See Charles Kupchan, *No One’s World: The West, the Rising Rest, and the Coming Global Turn* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

early days, now that security sector reform has come to vie with—and often to swamp—the secure restraint on arbitrary power. Perhaps we truly don’t know what we’re doing. Perhaps it is all too hard.

The global financial crisis also challenged the notion of a success package, this time from another angle; the economic package now seems altogether less seamless and sturdy than once it did. The success of China in economically rivalling the West, and the rise of (some of) “the rest,” form third and fourth challenges to what now seems to have been the premature triumphalism of 1989. A lot looks very different now. Whatever emerges from all these shocks, challenges, and disappointments will also be different from what seemed likely in 1989. If these are signs that we might be moving from the end of history to “no one’s world,” my conjecture is that one should expect this to be reflected in the future career prospects of the rule of law.

Like the rest of this chapter, the previous paragraph was written in 2013. Unfortunately, its conjecture proved more prescient than I knew. At the time of this revision (December 2017), authoritarian anti-constitutional populism is on the move globally, in both Western and East-Central Europe, no more than among some of the apparently greatest rule of law success stories of 1989, Hungary and Poland.⁶³ One thing that seems distinctive about these new populist movements are their designs on constitutionalism and law, and the apparently paradoxical ways legal and constitutional means are deployed to subvert constitutionalist ends. Indeed, lands once awash with the “third wave” of democracies are being inundated by what has variously been called “abusive constitutionalism,” “stealth constitutionalism,” “constitutional coups,” or “legal and constitutional hypocrisy.”⁶⁴ These forms of legal uses and abuses slip under the radar of much

⁶³ Bojan Bugarič, “The Populists at the Gates: Constitutional Democracy under Siege?” Draft paper submitted for the “Public Law and the New Populism Workshop,” September 15–17, 2017, accessed April 22, 2018, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/319955332_The_Populists_at_the_Gates_Constitutional_Democracy_Under_Siege; Grażyna Skąpska, “The Decline of Liberal Constitutionalism in East Central Europe,” in *The Routledge International Handbook of European Social Transformations*, ed. Peeter Vihalemm, Anu Masso and Signe Öpermann (London: Routledge, 2018), 130–45.

⁶⁴ See, respectively, Samuel Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991); David Landau, “Abusive Constitutionalism,” *University of California Davis Law Review* (2013): 189–63; Ozan O. Varol, “Stealth Authoritarianism,” *Iowa Law Review* 100, no. 4 (2015): 1673–1742; Kim Scheppele, “Constitutional Coups in EU Law,” in *Constitutionalism and Rule of Law: Bridging Idealism and Realism*, ed. Maurice Adams, Ernst M. H. Hirsch Ballin, and Anne Meuwese (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 446–78; Skąpska, “The Decline of Liberal Constitutionalism in East Central Europe.”

conventional rule of law promotion scrutiny, since rather than simply rejecting law, as we saw Lenin freely boast of doing, they bend legal devices designed for liberal, or at least “rule of law” purposes, to authoritarian ends. It is thus possible to be a rule of law success story in formal terms, while systematically violating the underlying values of the rule of law.⁶⁵

None of this means that the career of the rule of law is over. Once a rhetorical balloon is launched it doesn’t come down quickly. It is too full of air, some of it extremely hot. It frames agendas, concepts, the very ways we think and speak; moreover, too many people have a stake in keeping it aloft. They also have a stake in continuing to do things the way they have always done them. As such, old models and mistakes are unlikely to disappear overnight, and old language often masks new priorities, as when post-September 11 rule of law came to have a much higher dose of security sector reform, a mutation not always matched by changes to language coined in an older, more confident time, even where some of the new imperatives are inconsistent—often systematically inconsistent—with the old, at home and abroad.⁶⁶

Moreover, we cannot forget that in pre-hubristic, traditional, politically oriented understandings, the world needs the rule of law, the effective constraint on arbitrary power, as much or more than it ever did.⁶⁷ Properly understood as a value or cluster of values to do with taming and moderating the exercise of power, the rule of law is an extremely precious thing. It is a good in itself, as well as for other good things, however implausible the suggestion that it can be a panacea for all the many problems for which it has been prescribed, or that there is one way to achieve it *anywhere*, still less that we have a recipe that can be followed worldwide.⁶⁸ In its rise,

⁶⁵ Martin Krygier, “Re-imagining the Rule of Law,” 2017 Denis Leslie Mahoney Prize Lecture, accessed April 22, 2018, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/320291115_Re-imagining_the_Rule_of_Law.

⁶⁶ See, respectively, Stephen Holmes, “In Case of Emergency: Misunderstanding Tradeoffs in the War on Terror,” *California Law Review* 97 (2009): 301–56; Veronica L. Taylor, “Displacing ‘Development’: The New Agenda for Rule of Law Assistance,” *Northwestern University Law Review* 104 (2010): 260–61.

⁶⁷ See Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989 edition; original text, 1748); John Phillip Reid, *The Rule of Law* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2004); Thompson, *Whigs and Hunters*; Judith Shklar, “The Liberalism of Fear” and “Political Theory and the Rule of Law,” in *Judith Shklar: Political Thought and Political Thinkers*, ed. Stanley Hoffmann (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 3–20, 21–37; Krygier, “Four Puzzles about the Rule of Law,” 64–104.

⁶⁸ See Amartya Sen, “What is the Role of Legal and Judicial Reform in the Development Process?” World Bank Legal Conference, Washington, DC, June 5, 2000, accessed April 22, 2018, <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/>

something fundamentally healthy has undergone a kind of rhetorically and bureaucratically self-regenerating metastasis. If that could be slowed, the differences between health, pathology, and placebo clarified, and the role law and other social institutions and practices have in contributing to the values we seek from the rule of law explored, we would perhaps do better than we have.

Having risen so high, the rule of law balloon won't deflate or disappear soon. However, it might without loss be injected with some more humility, and its eager promiscuity moderated a little more successfully than in the recent past. If so, that might be one salutary consequence of the setbacks of the present age. And if that happens, it won't simply be due to what we could only learn after our most recent shocks and disappointments. These are lessons we should have learnt from those who have thought about the rule of law for a very long time. After all, Aristotle knew some of them, and Montesquieu others. The rule of law *is* better than the rule of any individual, and moderation in the exercise of power is a general good. These are large and general values, perhaps indeed universal, but they are complicated achievements. Of course, it's never too late. If the "next generation reform" of rule of law promotion, and the amendments to the Washington Consensus forced on promoters through reflection on the failures of earlier generations (only a couple of years before) are examples of hard-won humility about how complex and variable the ways of attaining the values of the rule of law are, they will be valuable lessons—even better than "international best practice"—to have learned.⁶⁹

INTLAWJUSTINST/Resources/legalandjudicial.pdf: 9–10. "We cannot very well say that the development process has gone beautifully even though people are being arbitrarily hanged, criminals go free while law-abiding citizens end up in jail, and so on. . . . Legal development is constitutively involved in the development process . . . even if legal development were not to contribute one iota to economic development . . . even then legal and judicial reform would be a critical part of the development process."

⁶⁹ Rachel Kleinfeld, *Advancing the Rule of Law Abroad: Next Generation Reform* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2012).

**PART THREE:
MYTHS AND
MYTHMAKING**

CHAPTER 7

Catalyst of History: Francis Fukuyama, the Iraq War, and the Legacies of 1989 in the Middle East

Samuel Helfont

In his initial essay on the “end of history,” Francis Fukuyama lamented that “The end of history will be a very sad time.” The past, he argued, had contained such romantic ideas as “the struggle for recognition, the willingness to risk one’s life for a purely abstract goal, the worldwide ideological struggle that called forth daring, courage, imagination, and idealism.” But at the end of history, these struggles were over, and Fukuyama described feeling “a powerful nostalgia for the time when history existed.”¹ As this chapter will describe, Fukuyama’s distress was premature. When he penned his essay on the end of history in 1989, he clearly had in mind the liberal rumblings in Eastern Europe that would eventually end the Cold War. However, a year later, in 1990, the United States would find itself in the midst of a significant crisis in Iraq. While initially seen as a quick and decisive victory for the West and its principles, the Iraq crisis would persist; indeed, as of this writing, America has yet to extricate itself from the conflict. On the contrary, it has sunk deeper not only into Iraqi affairs, but into the conflicts and upheavals of the broader Middle East. Fukuyama had allowed for further clashes, and even war, in his idea of the end of history. However, the Middle Eastern conflicts that have dominated American foreign policy for the past thirty years have often been accompanied by struggles over ideas, suggesting that history as an intellectual struggle is still very much with us. Debates over political order, and whether Western modernity has—or even should—triumph, have raged in discussions about the region, and continue to do so in the post-Arab Spring era. These were arguments that Fukuyama felt the ongoing collapse of communism in Central and Eastern Europe had settled, and he intended his statements on the end of history to provide the final word on the subject. Ironically, far from ending such debates, Fukuyama’s ideas have acted as a catalyst for the

¹ Francis Fukuyama, “The End of History?” *The National Interest* 16 (Summer 1989): 3–18.

events and ideological clashes that raged in the Middle East over the next thirty years.

Connecting the Dots: 1989 and 2003

On February 26, 2003, with the invasion of Iraq a mere month away, President George W. Bush addressed the American Enterprise Institute in Washington to outline his justifications for the impending war. As one might expect, he spoke of “a dictator” in Iraq who was “building and hiding weapons.” Furthermore, Bush declared that “this same tyrant has close ties to terrorist organizations, and could supply them with the terrible means to strike this country.” These assertions turned out to be overstated, or in some cases entirely false, but there was nothing extraordinary about an American president promising to eliminate what he described as an unacceptable threat. However, Bush did not end with these consequential but rather mundane assertions. To further justify the coming war, he launched into a long discussion about history and world order. “There was a time,” he insisted, “when many said that the cultures of Japan and Germany were incapable of sustaining democratic values. Well, they were wrong.” He then moved on to the issue at hand: “Some say the same of Iraq today. They are mistaken. The nation of Iraq—with its proud heritage, abundant resources, and skilled and educated people—is fully capable of moving toward democracy and living in freedom.” Tied up in such statements was a deep confidence in the notion that liberal democracy was humanity’s natural state: “Human cultures can be vastly different,” Bush continued, “yet the human heart desires the same good things, everywhere on Earth. In our desire to be safe from brutal and bullying oppression, human beings are the same.” For these “fundamental reasons,” Bush concluded that “freedom and democracy will always and everywhere have greater appeal than the slogans of hatred and the tactics of terror.” Accordingly, “any future the Iraqi people choose for themselves will be better than the nightmare world that Saddam Hussein has chosen for them.”²

These were astonishing statements for a man who, as a presidential candidate, had suggested that the United States needed to return to realism. During an election debate on international affairs in the fall of 2000, he repeatedly insisted that “interests” should be the guiding principle of foreign policy and argued, “I don’t think our troops ought to be used for what’s called nation-building.” He stated, rather bluntly, that “I’m not so

² George W. Bush, “President Discusses the Future of Iraq,” Washington DC, February 26, 2000, <http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2003/02/20030226-11.html>.

sure the role of the United States is to go around the world and say this is the way it's got to be," and then again, even more forcefully, "one way for us to end up being viewed as the ugly American is for us to go around the world saying, we do it this way, so should you."³ Bush's positions during the campaign became the foundation of what he referred to as a "humble" foreign policy. The United States would act when its interests were threatened, but it would not act to impose American values abroad. If a people were oppressed in some far-off corner of the world, it was those people who were obliged to do something about it, not the United States.

This outlook was short-lived. Following September 11, 2001, it seemed clear to many that problems festering in far-away places could no longer be ignored. As Bush argued at the American Enterprise Institute in his February 2003 address, "On a September morning, threats that had gathered for years, in secret and far away, led to murder in our country on a massive scale. As a result, we must look at security in a new way. . . ."⁴ The "new" ideas that Bush adopted, however, were not exactly novel. The notion of using American might to impose a liberal order was a key pillar of neo-conservatism—an ideology which had its roots in the Cold War, and whose advocates gained increasing confidence with the collapse of the Soviet Union. Neo-conservatives, and to some extent liberal interventionists, had seen the Western victory in the Cold War as a vindication of liberal-democratic capitalism. Perhaps the best articulation of their ideas could be found in Francis Fukuyama's essay-turned-book arguing for what he called "the end of history." The original essay appeared in the *National Interest* in the summer of 1989 and, therefore, was on newsstands during the final months prior to the collapse of the Berlin Wall. Tapping into the spirit of Western triumphalism, Fukuyama argued: "What we may be witnessing is not just the end of the Cold War, or the passing of a particular period of postwar history, but the end of history as such: that is, the end point of mankind's ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government."⁵ In such statements, Fukuyama made a Hegelian argument about the natural direction of the political, social, and most of all, intellectual evolution of mankind—with liberal democracy as the ultimate end-state. If one accepted this universalist worldview, propping up dictatorships to achieve geopolitical interests seemed both immoral and self-defeating.

As mentioned above, during his 2000 presidential campaign and then during his initial months in office, Bush was lukewarm to these ideas.

³ "October 11, 2000 Debate Transcript," *Commission on Presidential Debates*, October 11, 2000, <http://www.debates.org/?page=october-11-2000-debate-transcript>.

⁴ Bush, "President Discusses the Future of Iraq."

⁵ Fukuyama, "The End of History?"

However, following September 11, he saw them in a new light. His administration began to combine Fukuyama's ideas with other liberal international relations theories, such as democratic peace theory, which argued that liberal democracies did not fight wars against each other.⁶ Following September 11, policymakers in the Bush administration began arguing that democratization in the Middle East could ease the root causes of conflicts that had festered in the region and made it a perceived threat to the West. In short, democratization would "drain the swamps" that had produced al-Qaida and other terrorists.⁷ If Fukuyama was correct, and Middle Eastern dictatorships were atavistic holdovers destined for the dustbin of history, then a policy of democratization—by force, if required—seemed both feasible and necessary. Such reasoning also made democracy promotion a security issue, and thus transformed it into a vital American interest. Thus, Bush argued, American interests and American values—two concepts which are sometimes seen as incompatible—were both pointing toward the same strategy: democratization.

In his essay and book, Fukuyama had not argued that the end of history should be imposed by force, and he would later distance himself from the invasion of Iraq. Nevertheless, he was an early proponent of the war. On September 20, 2001—just nine days after the attacks in New York and Washington, and well before Iraq became a prominent issue—he signed a statement arguing that "even if evidence does not link Iraq directly to the attack, any strategy aiming at the eradication of terrorism and its sponsors must include a determined effort to remove Saddam Hussein from power in Iraq."⁸ If there was any further doubt that Bush was tapping into Fukuyama's ideas, it was dispelled later in 2003, when Bush gave an important address to the US Chamber of Commerce. In his speech, Bush offered a brief history of democratization, beginning in the early 1970s. He listed cases of democratic transitions in Spain, Greece, Latin America, South Korea, Taiwan, and South Africa, in an almost identical order to that in which Fukuyama had listed them at the beginning of Chapter 2 in his book. Then Bush, like Fukuyama, ended with a discussion of Nelson Mandela's election following his release from

⁶ For more on democratic peace theory, see Michael W. Doyle, *Ways of War and Peace* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1997).

⁷ See "Drain the Swamps," *The Washington Times*, October 17, 2002, <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2002/oct/17/20021017-092842-4057r/>; Efraim Kam, "The Middle East in Transition: An Overview," in *The Middle East Strategic Balance, 2003-2004*, ed. Shai Feldman and Yifta S. Shapir (Tel Aviv: Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies), 7.

⁸ "Letter to President Bush on the War on Terrorism," *Project for the New American Century*, September 20, 2001, <http://web.archive.org/web/20041230063728/http://www.newamericancentury.org/Bushletter.htm>.

prison.⁹ The implications of such an analysis were clear. Bush was channeling ideas that Fukuyama had articulated as communist dictatorships in Eastern Europe were crumbling. Bush would imbibe the lessons that Fukuyama had promulgated in 1989 and apply them to the twenty-first-century Middle East. In doing so, he would leave behind America's traditional approach of propping up Middle Eastern dictatorships in a quest for stability. Instead, the United States would work to achieve American security by bringing democracy to the Middle East.

Searching for an End of History in Iraq

It would be tempting to blame the Iraq War on ideologically motivated neo-conservatives, as many have done;¹⁰ and yet, one cannot deny that the ideas Bush used to justify the war went well beyond neo-conservative circles in Washington. As Fukuyama predicted, the end of the Cold War had reinforced the notion—at least in the West—that the natural and normative state of politics was liberal democracy. As such, when Bush invoked ideas about democracy to justify the Iraq War, he was able to gain support, and not only from the right. Important liberal and even leftist intellectuals such as Paul Berman and Christopher Hitchens in the United States, as well as Nick Cohen in the United Kingdom, supported the war.¹¹

However, the conception of liberal democracy as a self-evident good has not been as universal as Western liberals assume. The so-called Third Wave of democratization crested in the late 1990s and early 2000s, leaving

⁹ For an analysis, pointing out the similarities between the speech and Chapter 2 of Fukuyama's book, see Andrew Moore, "History, Freedom and Bureaucracy," in *The Wire and America's Dark Corners: Critical Essays*, ed. Arin Keeble and Ivan Stacy (Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Company, Inc., 2015), 17–18. To compare Bush's speech with Fukuyama's work, see George W. Bush, "Remarks by the President at the 20th Anniversary of the National Endowment for Democracy," November 6, 2003, <http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2003/11/20031106-2.html>; and Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: The Free Press, 1992), 13–15.

¹⁰ See, for example, Muhammad Idrees Ahmad, *The Road to Iraq: The Making of a Neoconservative War* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014).

¹¹ Paul Berman, *Terror and Liberalism* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2003); Christopher Hitchens, *A Long Short War: The Postponed Liberation of Iraq* (New York: Plume, 2003); Nick Cohen, *What's Left?: How the Left Lost its Way* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2007). Moreover, twenty-nine out of fifty Democratic senators voted in favor of the war. See US Senate "Roll Call Votes 107th Congress—2nd Session," October 11, 2002, http://www.senate.gov/legislative/LIS/roll_call_lists/roll_call_vote_cfm.cfm?congress=107&session=2&vote=00237.

the Middle East as authoritarian as ever. This left debates about liberal democracy unresolved among intellectuals and scholars who were concerned with the Middle East.¹² Ironically, when Bush tied the Iraq War to democratization, he used Fukuyama's ideas in a manner which stirred up the type of debates that Fukuyama had claimed were over.

Bush's strategy of promoting democracy—and the ultimate failure of that strategy to achieve its intended goals—led to a number of intellectual responses, as it empowered certain arguments, and weakened others. As one might expect, perhaps the most damage was done to liberals who shared Fukuyama's assumptions.

Mainstream Western academic and intellectual discussions of democracy in the Middle East have internalized Fukuyamist assumptions about liberalism as a natural and a normative political state. For example, arguments about "authoritarian persistence," "authoritarian reliance," "authoritarian durability," and any number of similar names for the phenomenon have been at the forefront of Middle Eastern political science in the past two decades.¹³ In a review of this scholarship, F. Gregory Gause refers to its essential conundrum as the "remarkable stability of the Arab regimes" prior to the Arab Spring of 2011.¹⁴ Yet, between the lines of Gause's argument, as well as in much of the literature itself, one finds assumptions about democracy, liberalism, history, and human nature. As others have pointed out, this literature often "emphasizes what is missing" in authoritarian states in the Middle East. Instead of investigating "what is," it fo-

¹² Raymond Hinnebusch, "Authoritarian Persistence, Democratization, Theory and the Middle East: An Overview and Critique," *Democratization* 13, no. 3 (June 2006): 373–95.

¹³ This body of literature is vast. For some examples, see: Nouredine Jebnoun, Mehrdad Kia, and Mimi Kirk, eds., *Modern Middle East Authoritarianism: Roots, Ramifications, and Crisis* (New York: Routledge, 2014); Oliver Schlumberger, ed., *Debating Arab Authoritarianism: Dynamics and Durability in Nondemocratic Regimes* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007); Stephen J. King, *The New Authoritarianism in the Middle East and North Africa* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009); Steven A. Cook, *Ruling But Not Governing: The Military and Political Development in Egypt, Algeria, and Turkey* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007); Henner Fürtig, ed., *The Arab Authoritarian Regime between Reform and Persistence* (Newcastle, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2007); Marsha Pripstein Posusney and Michele Penner Angrist, eds., *Authoritarianism in the Middle East: Regimes and Resistance* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishing, 2005).

¹⁴ F. Gregory Gause III, "Why Middle East Studies Missed the Arab Spring: The Myth of Authoritarian Stability," *Foreign Affairs* 90, no. 4 (July/August 2011): 81–90.

cuses on “what *should* (ideally) be.”¹⁵ In other words, one can only consider the persistence of these regimes “remarkable,” or see authoritarian resilience as a “question” that needs to be addressed, if one has internalized the assumptions of Fukuyama’s end of history—assumptions derived from the fall of communism in 1989.¹⁶ This scholarship has rested on the supposition that the non-democratic politics in the Middle East was somehow out of line with the natural order of human affairs, and therefore required explanation. Yet, in explaining the persistence of authoritarianism in the Middle East, scholars were also able to push back against narratives espousing its inevitability. The literature often shows how authoritarian rulers had developed mechanisms to prevent the emergence of liberal democracy. If those impediments could be removed, these authors suggest, then the region would join others at the end of history.

Similarly, historical and social-scientific scholarship on Iraq in the 1990s and 2000s often embarked on a quest to find manifestations of Fukuyamist assumptions about Iraqi politics. In doing so, this scholarship demonstrated that authoritarianism was often imposed on Iraqis, rather than being inherent in their political DNA. For example, Orit Bashkin has attempted to recover the pluralistic and democratic inclinations of Iraqi intellectuals from the 1920s to the 1950s.¹⁷ She suggests that this “Other Iraq” disrupted narratives of radical nationalism and totalitarianism that have defined Iraqi historiography. Peter Wien makes a similar intervention in his important work on Iraq in the 1930s and World War II. Although Iraq witnessed a pro-German uprising during the war, and some of its participants would later have significant influence in the regimes that ruled Iraq in the second half of the twentieth century, Wien resists narratives that associate Iraqi nationalism with Nazi totalitarianism.¹⁸

The search for evidence of resistance to authoritarianism or totalitarianism in Iraq extends to research on the Ba’thist period (1968–2003), especially in its final decade. Academic treatments of 1990s Iraq tended to portray the Iraqi Ba’th Party’s powers as receding. Saddam’s regime was isolated internationally and weakened by sanctions following the 1991 Gulf

¹⁵ Italics and parentheses are in the original. See Adham Saouli, *The Arab State: Dilemmas of Late Formation* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 3.

¹⁶ Barbara J. Falk, “1989 and Post-Cold War Policymaking: Were the ‘Wrong’ Lessons Learned from the Fall of Communism?,” *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society* 22, no. 3 (September 2009): 291–313.

¹⁷ Orit Bashkin, “Intellectuals in Monarchic Iraq, Representations of Iraqi Intellectuals, 1921–1941” (PhD diss., Princeton University, 2005); Orit Bashkin, *The Other Iraq: Pluralism and Culture in Hashemite Iraq* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008).

¹⁸ Peter Wien, *Iraqi Arab Nationalism: Authoritarian, Totalitarian and Pro-Fascist Inclinations, 1932–1941* (New York: Routledge, 2006).

War. As a result, some have argued that the Ba'athists were no longer able to exercise control over large segments of the population. Achim Rohde has argued that, at this time, the regime began to permit—or was unable to prevent—the opening of “autonomous social spaces,” as well as discussions of topics once considered taboo. At one point, he went so far as to liken this period in Iraq to the emergence of civil society in other authoritarian states.¹⁹ Eric Davis applied Gramsci's concept of hegemony to his research on Iraq. While Davis mostly discussed the Ba'athist regime's attempt to establish hegemony, he also highlighted what he termed “counter-hegemonic” forces in the 1990s.²⁰

These works share a tendency to show that Iraq was not inevitably totalitarian. They often depict Iraq as a place that possessed intellectuals and even members of a pseudo-civil society who, like others all over the world, strove for Fukuyama's end of history. This scholarship mostly came after 2003, and can in no way be held responsible for the Iraq War. Indeed, many of the scholars responsible for producing this literature share very little in common with Bush politically. Yet, one cannot deny that they maintained certain liberal assumptions about Iraqi politics, and that the Bush administration had instrumentalized those ideas in 2003. Consequently, these ideas and assumptions were open to criticism when Bush's policies failed.

Some academics had a more direct impact on the decision to invade Iraq. The liberal Iraqi dissident-turned-Brandeis professor, Kanan Makiya, had maintained that if Iraqis could rid themselves of Saddam's tyranny, they would adopt liberal democratic politics. As such, Iraqis would join the rest of the world at the end of history. Makiya advised the Bush administration that Saddam had lost control over Iraqi society, and he predicted that the American invaders would be greeted with “sweets and flowers.”²¹ Fouad Ajami, a Lebanese-born professor and colleague of Fukuyama's at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies, shared Makiya's assumption that liberalism was the natural state of politics in the Arab world and that Arab politics had been distorted by authoritarian re-

¹⁹ Achim Rohde, *State-Society Relations in Ba'athist Iraq: Facing Dictatorship* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 13.

²⁰ Eric Davis, *Memories of State: Politics, History, and Collective Identity in Modern Iraq* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 227.

²¹ See Jordan Michael Smith, “Makiya has no regret about pressing the war in Iraq: Ten years later, a moral architect of the invasion stands by his words,” *The Boston Globe*, March 16, 2013, <http://www.bostonglobe.com/ideas/2013/03/16/kanan-makiya-regret-about-pressing-war-iraq/k6ZsBxp4sXptfXrcRAocdO/story.html>; and Kanan Makiya, *Republic of Fear: The Politics of Modern Iraq* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), xv.

gimes.²² He also became a prominent supporter of the war in Iraq and a valued adviser to the White House. The influential Princeton historian, Bernard Lewis, offered his analysis to Vice President Dick Cheney specifically, and to the broader Bush administration in general. He described Iraq as the “already crumbling tyranny of Saddam Hussein.”²³ In defending the war, Lewis later suggested that American strategy in the Middle East should be to help Arabs develop democracy, though he did not go so far as to promote doing so by force.²⁴

Assumptions about the potential for democracy and liberalism in Iraq should not be written off simply as apologetics or wishful thinking. As cognitive psychologists have shown, people tend to see what they expect to see, not what they want to see.²⁵ Accordingly, one could suggest that analysts of Iraq looked for, and found, trends in Iraq which they expected to find. Such expectations were clearly shaped by events in 1989. As Fukuyama argued, it has become difficult for people in the West—academics included—to imagine another system of government or another way of life.

Post-2003 Iraq and the Upending of Assumptions

The Iraq War proved to be a crossroads for discourses on democracy in the Middle East. It was there that the Bush administration planted the flag of liberal democratic triumphalism, and the failure of American policies in Iraq influenced debates on democracy in general. The Bush administration clearly instrumentalized ideas about democracy, liberalism, and history to justify the war in Iraq; however, this is not to say that the administration did not believe in these ideas. Assumptions about the end of history and the natural state of politics had real implications for the way that the Bush administration planned and carried out the war in Iraq. Accordingly, the country was used as a test case for many of these Fukuyamist assumptions.

Military historians and journalists who have written about the invasion have shown that the war plans placed very little emphasis on what American doctrine describes as “Phase IV” of war planning, also referred to as

²² Fouad Ajami, *The Foreigner's Gift: The Americans, the Arabs, and the Iraqis in Iraq* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2006).

²³ Bernard Lewis, *Notes on a Century: Reflections of a Middle East Historian* (New York: Viking, 2012), 329–30.

²⁴ “Islam and the West: A Conversation with Bernard Lewis,” *Pew Research Center*, April 27, 2006, <http://www.pewforum.org/2006/04/27/islam-and-the-west-a-conversation-with-bernard-lewis/>.

²⁵ Richards J. Heuer, Jr., *Psychology of Intelligence Analysis* (Washington, DC: Center for the Study of Intelligence, Central Intelligence Agency, 1999), 7–17.

post-conflict stabilization. This was not simply negligence—though many accounts of the invasion suggest that negligence played a role.²⁶ Rather, the Bush administration held two views of Iraq that were both closely tied to a notion of the end of history, and which led to serious problems once the war began.

First, as Fukuyama later argued, the manner in which communist regimes collapsed at the end of the Cold War “created an expectation that all totalitarian regimes were hollow at the core and would crumble with a small push from outside.”²⁷ As such, the Bush administration understood Saddam’s regime as an anachronism, and it readily accepted arguments that Ba’thist rule was indeed decaying. Much like the academics discussed above, war planners seemed to assume that, even in the face of a brutal regime, Iraqis were beginning to operate independently of the regime, forming grassroots organizations. Thus, even prior to the invasion, Iraqis were moving inevitably toward civil society and liberalism. Accordingly, in 2003, the US military based its war plan on what it termed the “balloon theory” of the Iraqi regime.²⁸ This theory posited that, because the regime was weak, it could be easily destroyed. Moreover, in removing the regime, social institutions, which were already beyond the regime’s control, would remain largely intact. These social institutions would provide the foundation of a new Iraq.

Second, the Bush administration was convinced that once Iraqis were freed from the totalitarian grip of Saddam Hussein, they would naturally turn to democracy. In Fukuyama’s words, Bush and his neo-conservative advisors had learned from the collapse of Soviet rule in Central and Eastern Europe that “once the wicked witch was dead, the munchkins would rise up and start singing joyously about their liberation.”²⁹ They expected a similar situation to manifest in Iraq—the Iraqi people would be grateful for their liberation and, with some help from the Americans, liberal institutions would inevitably begin to emerge. Accordingly, in their post-invasion planning, the Bush administration and the Department of Defense concen-

²⁶ See, for example, Thomas Ricks, *Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq* (New York: Penguin Press, 2006); Michael R. Gordon and General Bernard E. Trainor, *Cobra II: The Inside Story of the Invasion and Occupation of Iraq* (New York: Random House, 2007); George Packer, *The Assassins’ Gate: America in Iraq* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005); Bob Woodward, *Plan of Attack: The Definitive Account of the Decision to Invade Iraq* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2004).

²⁷ Francis Fukuyama, “After Neoconservatism,” *New York Times Magazine*, February 19, 2006, <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/02/19/magazine/after-neoconservatism.html>.

²⁸ Gordon and Trainor, *Cobra II*, 77.

²⁹ Fukuyama, “After Neoconservatism.”

trated on weeding out the last vestiges of the old regime, rather than planning for the future of Iraq.³⁰

These two assumptions proved problematic. Following the invasion, Iraqis did not suddenly become liberal democrats. American war planners had assumed that, after the fall of Saddam, the US military's main role would be to suppress any remnants of the former regime, so that a new Iraq could emerge from the ashes unimpeded. Yet in February 2004, less than a year into the occupation, the senior American general in the Middle East, John Abizaid, reported to the National Security Council that, contrary to expectations, "the major threat was no longer coming from former members of Saddam's regime . . . but from hard-core Sunni terrorists affiliated with al-Qaeda, like Ansar al-Islam in northern Iraq and Abu Musab al-Zarqawi's Tawhid wal-Jihad in Anbar."³¹ A similar phenomenon was occurring in southern Iraq. Islamist Shi'is tied to Iran or associated with Muqtada al-Sadr were emerging as significant sources of instability. These were not the forces of liberalism that many had predicted would emerge once the authoritarian system in Iraq was removed, but rather forces that Saddam's dictatorship had suppressed. These illiberal actors would tear the country apart over the following decade, and continue to do so at the time of writing, in late 2018.

These developments in post-2003 Iraq challenge assumptions about liberal democracy as a natural and universal political order for humanity. Similarly, assumptions about pre-2003 Iraq also need to be reconsidered. It now appears clear that theories of Saddam losing control over Iraq, or of civil society emerging, were overstated. On the ground, the regime was much more robust than outside observers had anticipated. This was noticed by the invading forces almost immediately. In the words of two prominent historians of the war, the Bush administration's assumptions left the invading forces "utterly unprepared for the mission."³² One US military officer simply stated: "No assessment ever accounted for the threat we faced."³³ In places where the invading forces thought they would be welcomed by a grateful population, they often encountered fierce resistance from Saddam's popular militias and security forces. Tellingly, they received no aid from the population, even in Shi'i regions, which possessed high levels of disdain for Saddam.³⁴ Of course, many Iraqis did oppose the regime, and some Iraqi Shi'is, who were

³⁰ Ricks, *Fiasco*; Gordon and Trainor, *Cobra II*; Packer, *The Assassins' Gate*; Woodward, *Plan of Attack*.

³¹ Michael R. Gordon and General Bernard E. Trainor, *The Endgame: The Inside Story of the Struggle for Iraq, from George W. Bush to Barack Obama* (New York: Vintage, 2012): 48–49.

³² Gordon and Trainor, *Cobra II*, 318.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

seen as natural allies by war-planners, recounted that if there had been “any sign of weakness by the government” there would have been an “uprising.” But there was no sign of weakness, and there was no uprising. The Iraqi Shi‘is were simply too afraid.³⁵ During the invasion, Patrick Cockburn reported that “security services were everywhere on the alert.” He stated that even the opposition, such as the Sadrist trend, “by their own account” did not challenge the regime in any meaningful way.³⁶

The war produced a wealth of archival material from Saddam’s Iraq. Scholars who have examined the regime’s internal records have become equally skeptical about the extent of the Ba‘thists’ demise in the 1990s and early 2000s. For example, Joseph Sassoon argues that “we now know from the archives that the Ba‘th Party did not weaken in the 1990s: no committee was ever set up without a representative of the party secretariat, and membership increased by roughly 38 percent between 1991 and 1996.”³⁷

Sassoon explains earlier misperceptions by distinguishing the Iraqi state from the Ba‘th Party. He claims that the state was weakened and that outside observers mistook this for the weakening of the ruling party. It is undeniable that the state lost much of its economic resources in the 1990s; it could no longer (or at least chose not to) fund basic services, let alone the large economic development projects of earlier decades. This weakened the regime’s position considerably, as it could not offer as many incentives to Iraqi society. The regime was also unable to fund the military to the extent one would expect in a robust authoritarian regime. However, one should not assume—as had been the case in much of the secondary literature—that a type of proto-civil society would emerge in the absence of these mechanisms of state power. As others have pointed out, international sanctions targeted the regime, but they weakened Iraqi social institutions to an even greater extent. Ultimately, the sanctions produced a weakened Iraqi state that was, nonetheless, comparatively stronger than an absolutely devastated Iraqi society.³⁸ As such, the void left behind was not filled by civil, let alone liberal, actors; indeed, the void was often filled by the Ba‘th Party itself. Contrary to expectations, this seems to have occurred even in the predominantly Shi‘i areas of the country.³⁹

³⁵ Patrick Cockburn, *Muqtada: Muqtada al-Sadr, the Shia Revival, and the Struggle for Iraq* (New York: Scribner, 2008), 115.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ Joseph Sassoon, review of *State-Society Relations in Ba‘thist Iraq: Facing Dictatorship*, by Achim Rohde, *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 43, no. 3 (August 2011): 562.

³⁸ Bassam Yousif, “The Political Economy of Sectarianism in Iraq,” *International Journal of Contemporary Iraqi Studies* 4, no. 3 (2010): 362.

³⁹ Lisa Blaydes, “Compliance and Resistance in Iraq under Saddam Hussein: Evidence from the Files of the Ba‘th Party,” Paper presented at the Annual Meeting

Thus, if the Ba'athist regime was weakened by the sanctions in that it lost its ability to provide lavish incentives and development projects, it often made up for this loss through a system of fear and cooptation. In hindsight, it seems that scholars and policy makers misread the evidence suggesting that Saddam's regime was crumbling, and that grassroots pockets of civil society were primed to fill the vacuum. As it turns out, Iraqis were not marching along the Hegelian path of history that Fukuyama had laid out for them.

Democratization and its Discontents

The Bush administration's adoption of democratization as a strategy to achieve American interests was not limited to Iraq. By the end of his first term, Bush had expanded the strategy to the entire Middle East. This was probably best illustrated in his second inaugural address in January 2005. In it, Bush argued that September 11, 2001 had altered deeply held assumptions about American foreign policy, and that those attacks had made clear that the "survival of liberty in our land increasingly depends on the success of liberty in other lands." Furthermore, he claimed that "the best hope for peace in our world is the expansion of freedom in all the world." The speech was inundated with similarly soaring rhetoric about "freedom," a word which appears twenty-seven times, and "liberty," which appears fifteen times.⁴⁰ Yet rather than setting the tone for Bush's second term, this second inaugural address turned out to be the apex of what Bush referred to as his "freedom agenda."

In addition to Iraq's downward spiral, the strategy of promoting democracy in the Middle East was quickly challenged by two events in the first year of Bush's second term. First, in Egypt, the US pushed its long-time autocratic ally, Hosni Mubarak, to allow more open parliamentary elections. The election took place in three rounds, yet after the first round it became clear that the Islamist, anti-Western Muslim Brotherhood was to be the greatest beneficiary of the new openness. Scott Carpenter, who was Deputy Assistant Secretary of State from 2005 to 2006 and responsible for the administration's democratization initiative in the Middle East, stated that after the Muslim Brotherhood's gains in the first round, "a combination of factors led us to blink" in the subsequent round.⁴¹ The Bush administration took some of the pressure off Mubarak, and acquiesced to his authoritarian tactics.

of the Association for Analytic Learning on Islam and Muslim Societies, Rice University, April 2, 2013; Cockburn, *Muqtada*, 107.

⁴⁰ "President Bush's Second Inaugural Address," January 20, 2005. The full text of the speech can be found at <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=4460172>.

⁴¹ Eli Lake, "Déjà Vu in Cairo," *The New Republic*, February 1, 2011, <http://www.newrepublic.com/article/world/82456/egypt-riots-bush-mubarak>.

In the Palestinian territories, parliamentary elections were initially scheduled for July 2005, but the Palestinian Authority had managed to delay them. The Bush administration continued to push for elections; against the recommendations of some senior Palestinian officials, they were held in January 2006. Bush and his advisors saw the election as a central component of solving the Arab-Israeli conflict and promoting its freedom agenda in the broader region. However, Hamas, which was and remains a US-designated terrorist group, managed to win fifty-six percent of the seats in the Palestinian legislature, putting the US in an awkward position. As a result of an election that it had insisted on holding, a group took power in the Palestinian territories with which the Bush administration was legally restricted from having relations. Furthermore, Hamas refused to even recognize, let alone negotiate, with Israel. Instead of advancing the peace process, the election proved a major setback.⁴²

These events put proponents of Middle Eastern democracy on the defensive. Theoretically, one could distinguish between proponents of democracy who saw it as an incontestable force, which if unleashed would quickly supersede other ideologies, and those who simply saw its promotion as desirable. However, in practice, these (very important) nuances did not always matter. As Fukuyama wrote in 2006, Bush's policies in his first term "led many critics to simply desire the opposite of whatever he wants."⁴³ As a result, other perspectives, which did not share Fukuyamist assumptions about the link between modernity and liberal democracy, experienced a resurgence. The Realist school of international relations, for example, puts little to no emphasis on democratization; at times, Realists even cautioned against it as reckless and hubristic. With the failure of Bush's "freedom agenda" in the mid-2000s, Realists began to fill the intellectual void in both policy and academic circles. To reassess American strategy in Iraq, the US Congress assembled the "Iraq Study Group" in 2006. This bipartisan study group was led by Republican former Secretary of State James A. Baker III and Democratic former Congressman Lee H. Hamilton. The group recommended that the US reverse its neo-conservative policies in the Middle East—for example, by reaching out to Syria and Iran, both of which were accused of supporting terrorism, of being serial abusers of human rights, and of being general impediments to spreading liberal democracy in the region. The *Washington Post* argued that the resulting report "might well be titled 'The Realist Manifesto.'"⁴⁴ Realist academics

⁴² See David Rose, "The Gaza Bombshell," *Vanity Fair*, April 2008, <http://www.vanityfair.com/news/2008/04/gaza200804>.

⁴³ Francis Fukuyama, *America at the Crossroads: Democracy, Power, and the Neoconservative Legacy* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006), 47.

⁴⁴ Glenn Kessler and Thomas E. Ricks, "The Realists' Repudiation of Policies for a War, Region," *Washington Post*, December 7, 2006, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/local/localnews/2006/12/07/>

such as Stephen Walt and John Mearsheimer, who had opposed the invasion of Iraq, also capitalized on its failure. Their explanation of what had gone wrong in US foreign policy (and their naming of a scapegoat) propelled them to the status of public intellectuals, garnering them lucrative speaking and book contracts.⁴⁵

Beyond proponents of realism, other critics of liberalism and Western modernity also benefitted from the failure of the Bush administration's attempt to spread democracy in the Middle East. Among academics, this trend is perhaps best represented by those who advocate postcolonial or postmodernist approaches to the Middle East. Such scholars not only argued against the imposition of liberal democracy by force, but also questioned whether liberal democracy was even appropriate for Middle Eastern, particularly Muslim populations. Naturally, postcolonial and postmodern analysis was not new, but Bush's policies provided scholars in this camp with a perfect foil. As a result, their work acquired new vigor in the first decade of the twenty-first century. Often these postcolonial and postmodern scholars argued that Western modernity was in essence a type of European post-Christianity.⁴⁶ For example, such pillars of liberal democratic thinking as the separation of church and state can be said to be an outgrowth of the Christian dictum, "render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's." As a result, some question whether such assumptions can, or should, be present in the Islamic Middle East.⁴⁷

Other scholarship took these critiques further. Saba Mahmood's analysis of religious piety among Muslim women in Egypt attempted not only to rethink the appropriateness of liberalism, but also to destabilize individual freedom as the norm.⁴⁸ Timothy Mitchell's work has taken aim at the liberal capitalist order which provides the foundation for modernity and democratic politics. Instead of seeing liberal democracy as emerging from the realm of ideas, as Fukuyama would have it, Mitchell argued that it was the

washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/12/06/AR2006120601482.html.

⁴⁵ The book deal they signed to write *The Israel Lobby* reportedly came with a \$750,000 advance. See Christopher L. Ball, ed., *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy: Roundtable Review*, H-Diplo Roundtables- Volume VIII, no. 18 (2007): 3. <http://h-diplo.org/roundtables/PDF/IsraelLobby-Schoenbaum.pdf>

⁴⁶ The most prominent example of this line of thinking is probably Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003).

⁴⁷ See Chapter 3 of Bruce Rutherford, *Egypt after Mubarak: Liberalism, Islam, and Democracy in the Arab World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 77–130.

⁴⁸ Saba Mahmood, *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011).

result of economic gains made possible by the burning of fossil fuels. Thus, in place of a deliberative democracy he sees a “carbon democracy,” which is dependent on exploiting fossil fuels, often in the context of imperialism. As such, democracy is not a system of ideas that can simply be adopted in the Middle East.⁴⁹ Following these types of analyses, some postcolonial intellectuals have asserted that Western modernity and liberal democracy cannot, and indeed should not, be an option for Arabs and Muslims in the Middle East. Tariq Ramadan, for example, has argued that Arabs and Muslims should reject Western liberal influences and instead rely on “their own history” and “their values.”⁵⁰

These arguments are difficult to square with Fukuyama’s end of history. After all, Fukuyama had allowed for the continual unfolding of events, and even wars, but he thought that the intellectual battles over modernity, liberalism, and democracy had been decided. Fukuyama was alarmed by the return to prominence of what he saw as enemies of liberalism, democracy, and even modernity itself. He was particularly concerned about the resurgence of Realism, both in academic and policy circles.⁵¹ Furthermore, he expressed his dismay that some intellectuals felt the authoritarianism of Russia and China could offer an alternative model for Third World states in the Middle East.⁵²

Fukuyama felt a need to intervene against these trends. In February 2006, he began a stunning essay in the *New York Times Magazine* by asserting, “it seems very unlikely that history will judge either the intervention [in Iraq] itself or the ideas animating it kindly.”⁵³ In this and several other high-profile pieces he published in the following years, Fukuyama distanced himself from the war in Iraq, and attempted to distinguish his concept of the end of history from the ideas that the Bush administration used to justify it. In doing so, he hoped to rescue the concepts of liberalism and democracy as universal forces.

Furthermore, Fukuyama argued that critics of the Bush administration were essentially throwing the baby out with the bathwater. In attempting to

⁴⁹ Timothy Mitchell, *Carbon Democracy: Political Power in the Age of Oil* (London: Verso, 2011).

⁵⁰ Tariq Ramadan, *Islam and the Arab Awakening* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 31.

⁵¹ Fukuyama, “After Neoconservatism.”

⁵² Francis Fukuyama, “They Can Only Go So Far: The world’s bullies are throwing their weight around. But history isn’t on their side,” *Washington Post*, August 24, 2008, http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/08/22/AR2008082202395_pf.html. Indeed, some postcolonial intellectuals have argued that China could be a better alternative to the United States as a hegemon. See Ramadan, *Islam and the Arab Awakening*, 60–61.

⁵³ Fukuyama, “After Neoconservatism.”

distance his ideas from the Iraq war, he insisted that the Bush administration's focus on democratic transformation had only become the centerpiece of its strategy once it became clear that Iraq did not possess weapons of mass destruction. He also asserted that his ideas had not influenced the architects of the war. He pointed out that both in his essay and in his book on the end of history, he had never suggested that the liberal democratic order could or should be imposed by force. While acknowledging his links to the neo-conservative intellectuals in the Bush administration, he suggested that these neo-conservatives had twisted his ideas.⁵⁴ In his 2006 essay and elsewhere, he began to assert that he had "presented a kind of Marxist argument for the existence of a long-term process of social evolution, but one that terminates in liberal democracy rather than communism." However, "the neoconservative position . . . was, by contrast, Leninist; they believed that history can be pushed along with the right application of power and will."⁵⁵

All clever historical analogies aside, Fukuyama understated his role and that of his ideas in assisting the Bush administration's case for the war. For example, in his 2006 book, *America at the Crossroads: Democracy, Power, and the Neoconservative Legacy*, he attempted to distance his intellectual history from the policies of the Bush administration. Yet his depiction of his own history was not always candid. For example, he admitted to signing a 1998 letter sponsored by the Project for a New American Century which he said had called on then-President Clinton "to take a harder line against Baghdad." However, Fukuyama insisted that he "was never persuaded of the rationale for the Iraq war."⁵⁶ Such protestations were often distortions. The 1998 letter that Fukuyama signed did not merely call for a "harder line"; it called for "removing Saddam Hussein and his regime from power."⁵⁷ Even less defensibly, in outlining his intellectual history, Fukuyama conveniently left out any mention of the second letter he signed with the Project for the New American Century following the September 11 attacks. That letter called for regime change in Iraq as part of a broader "War on Terrorism," and almost certainly influenced thinking within the Bush administration.⁵⁸

Despite these problems, Fukuyama's depiction of democratization playing the role of Marxism, and neo-conservative policies that of Leninism,

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.; also Fukuyama, *America at the Crossroads*, 55.

⁵⁶ Fukuyama, *America at the Crossroads*, xxx.

⁵⁷ "Open Letter to President Bill Clinton," *Project for the New American Century*, January 26, 1998, <https://web.archive.org/web/20131021171040/http://www.newamericancentury.org/iraqclintonletter.htm>.

⁵⁸ "Letter to President Bush on the War on Terrorism," *Project for the New American Century*, September 20, 2001.

was part of a broader trend which allowed liberals to critique the Bush administration's policies while maintaining their faith in democracy as an option in the Middle East. The debate over the proper political models for the future of the region is far from over.

Conclusion: The End of History in a Post-Arab Spring Middle East?

Fukuyama has insisted that his notion of the end of history was simply a description of the collective human condition at the end of the twentieth century, rather than a policy prescription for Western leaders. Nevertheless, the assumptions that underpinned his end of history thesis continue to drive Western policy and intellectual debates about the Middle East in at least two ways. First, the assumptions about politics and modernity inherent in the end of history thesis often provide a context in which Western policy-makers, intellectuals, and scholars operate. Such an outlook privileges debates on certain issues—for instance, the search for resistance to authoritarianism or the need to explain a lack of democracy—and as the Iraq War demonstrated, there are policy implications for understanding the Middle East through such a lens. Second, the power of the end of history thesis among Western populations makes it a useful tool for Western leaders who would like to instrumentalize it in achieving their policy goals. The Bush administration clearly did so when it sold the Iraq War to the American people and the Western world more generally.

In both cases, the ideas that inform the end of history thesis have proven a powerful and resilient force in Western foreign policy and academic circles—perhaps too powerful. They have driven policies that clashed with realities on the ground in the Middle East. Instead of resolving debates in their favor, claims about the end of history over the past fifteen or so years have often resulted in chaos, which in turn has empowered the opponents of liberal democracy in the Middle East. Paradoxically, therefore, the ideas that Fukuyama outlined as the end of intellectual debate over political order have, in fact, inflamed those debates with regard to the Middle East.

Despite these setbacks, the appeal of a liberal, democratic modernity as the end of history, while bruised and battered, remains a strong force in the West. It has weathered encounters with the Middle East over the past decade and a half for two reasons. First, while Realists and postcolonial opponents of promoting liberal democracy in the Middle East have undoubtedly gained intellectual currency at liberalism's expense, these same scholars and policymakers enjoy all the benefits of liberalism on their university campuses and in the halls of power. Very few of them would voluntarily give up such benefits to live under the systems that they deem acceptable for the peoples of the Middle East. This incongruence in the arguments of

liberalism's critics lends itself to charges of hypocrisy, and does not offer a way forward for policy-makers. Second, intellectuals such as Fukuyama—despite their claims of consistency—have continually adjusted their views to deflect criticisms and adapt to new realities. As such, Fukuyama had no problem promoting regime change in Iraq as a means to bring liberal democracy to the Middle East, until that policy failed. Consequently, Fukuyama and other liberals forged a new narrative. Democracy could not be imposed by force, they argued, and the Bush administration had warped their ideas in a Leninist fashion, attempting to rush history.

This narrative seemed plausible in the wake of the Iraq War, but it has been challenged in the second decade of the twenty-first century. When the Arab Spring erupted in 2011, it seemed to be everything that Fukuyama said the invasion of Iraq was not. Democracy was arising indigenously in Arab countries. Autocratic systems seemed to crumble under the weight of popular will, rather than outside force. Consequently, the Arab Spring was not susceptible to the critique of Leninism. During the initial period of the Arab Spring, moreover, American policies again seemed to be informed by Fukuyamist assumptions. President Obama consciously stood by as long-time allies in Egypt and Tunisia fell. Washington also supported the democratic process in those countries, even when anti-American forces such as the Muslim Brotherhood made significant gains. After some initial successes, however, almost all of the countries that experienced the Arab Spring have either reverted to authoritarianism or crumbled into chaos and civil war. As of this writing, Fukuyama and other Western liberals have yet to adjust. They have not put forward a compelling narrative of what comes next for democracy and liberalism in the region, or why the Arab Spring failed. They will need to do so if they are to continue to stave off arguments from their postcolonial and Realist critics, who are again set to capitalize on the failure of the end of history thesis to explain the Middle East.

Paradoxically, critics of Fukuyama's end of history thesis who are looking for a new way forward may find it in some of his more recent works. Indeed, Fukuyama has evolved once more. His latest project is a two-volume, 1200-page *magnum opus* on the history of political order.⁵⁹ Earlier in his career, the triumph of liberal democracy in Central and Eastern Europe had highlighted the power of ideas. As Fukuyama argued in 1989, "the victory of liberalism has occurred primarily in the realm of ideas," and "there are powerful reasons for believing that it is the ideal that will govern

⁵⁹ Francis Fukuyama, *The Origins of Political Order: From Prehuman Times to the French Revolution* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2011); Fukuyama, *Political Order and Political Decay: From the Industrial Revolution to the Globalization of Democracy* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2014).

the material world in the long run.”⁶⁰ What constitutes the “long run” is open for debate, but it is clear that such ideals have yet to overcome the limits of the material world in the Middle East. In Fukuyama’s more recent works, he has adjusted accordingly. Ideas have not disappeared, but they have been subordinated to the realities of geography, history, colonial legacies, and even climate. To the extent that ideas matter, they can only operate within these often quite restrictive frameworks. Neither military “shock and awe,” nor the hope and courage of the Arab Spring protesters, are enough to overcome the material world. The Middle East may one day become a bastion of liberal democracy, but it will only do so by dealing with, and working within, its often difficult social, historical, and economic legacies. That is a generational project for which the examples provided by rapid liberalization in post-communist Central and Eastern Europe are of limited value.

⁶⁰ Fukuyama, “The End of History?”

CHAPTER 8

Social Movement vs. Social Arrest: The Global Occupations of the Twenty-first Century^{*}

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On December 17, 2010, the self-immolation of a Tunisian fruit seller set off a wave of uprisings that spread, with mercurial speed, around the Mediterranean basin and across its democratic divide.¹ Within months, permanent occupations or tent cities had become fixtures of the urban landscapes of Spain, Greece, Israel, Egypt, Libya, and Syria. By fall 2011, these uprisings had cascaded as far north as the United Kingdom and, jumping the Atlantic, inspired both the form and name of the Occupy protests in the United States.² In the summer of 2013, Turkey, Brazil, and Bulgaria all followed suit.

The global interconnectedness and resonance of these uprisings, so evident to the protesters, has largely been ignored by its commentators. While notable exceptions exist, the overall tendency of most accounts has been to compartmentalize and classify. Middle Eastern resistance to dictatorship, Northern Mediterranean unrest against externally enforced austerity meas-

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¹ The "democratic divide" refers to the distinction that liberal representative democracies make between their regimes and all others (in this case, the dictatorships of the Arab World). Within the context of the Mediterranean, it refers to the geopolitical division of the states that, with the exception of Lebanon and Israel, is formed roughly along the thirty-fifth parallel north.

² Throughout this chapter, I have chosen to use the term *uprising* to refer to the contentious political acts that have taken place around the globe since 2011. *Uprising* has historically been situated somewhere in between the terms *demonstration*, *protest*, or *manifestation* on the one hand, and *revolution* on the other. The former usually, but not always, imply pre-planned or pre-organized acts, whereas uprising has a more spontaneous connotation. This is in keeping with the nature of the contentious political acts since 2011. *Uprising* is also differentiated from the prevalent understanding of *revolution* in that it is not conditioned by its future outcome (that is, the necessity of successful change in the existing social, economic, or political order.)

ures, and an Anglo-Saxon revolt against the tyranny of the financial sector have all been analyzed as discrete cases, each with their own structural and contingent dynamics. The results of this compartmentalization are all too predictable. Half a decade on, instead of a single, unified image of global rebellion, we are left with fractured portraits of localized discontent.

This chapter, much as the volume as a whole has done for the 1989 revolutions, will examine the uprisings since 2011 through a global lens. To do so, it will focus on a form common to all: the continuous occupation of public space. Beginning in 2011, people from all walks of life came to the central squares of the world's cities and formed various semi-permanent sites of protest. I want to assess the historical significance of this new type of public occupation, trace its continuities and departures from the last round of global uprisings in 1989, and discuss its impact for our understandings of revolution, democracy, and their interrelation.

What happened during these uprisings, how the people who were present took part in them, offers a radically different version of democracy—both in theory and practice—from the liberal representative one that has become hegemonic today. This chapter will underscore how this alternate vision of a democratic society is intimately tied to a new form of contentious politics, one predicated on occupation and arrest rather than movement and dispersal. To do so, it highlights how these uprisings have called into question two assumptions common to the liberal understanding of contemporary politics: first, the association between democracy and representative government; and second, the association between contentious politics and the category of movement.

In this context, the chapter challenges the continued use of the term *social movement* to define contentious political struggle in the twenty-first century, and makes the case for a theory and practice of *social arrest*. It argues that a politics of social arrest has come to define the global occupations of public space since 2011, a politics that has turned these spaces into immanent sites of democratic self-institution. Drawing upon the work of Cornelius Castoriadis, Sheldon Wolin, and Jacques Rancière, the chapter locates in these spaces a radically different conception of democracy and democratic subjectivity than that offered by the liberal representative model.³ All this in order to ask the most fundamental question: do the global uprisings since 2011 form a coherent alternative to the uni-ideological global order we have inhabited since 1989? Part historical, part speculative, part anecdotal, and part theoretical, this chapter is a medita-

³ See Cornelius Castoriadis, "Democracy as Procedure and Democracy as Regime," *Constellations* 4, no. 1 (1997): 1–18; Sheldon Wolin, "Fugitive Democracy," *Constellations* 1, no. 1 (1994): 11–25; Jacques Rancière, *On the Shores of Politics*, trans. Liz Heron (London: Verso, 1995).

tion on the significance of the first major mass uprisings since “the end of history.”⁴

The Police Conception of Revolution

The participants of the 2011 uprisings, whether in Madrid, Benghazi, Cairo, or New York, all believed they were carrying out a democratic revolution. The reactions of Western media and governments, however, were more cautious. This section first outlines the dominant Western response to the global uprisings and then traces the historical evolution in Western political epistemology since 1989 that made this response possible.

The first striking aspect of the Western response was its bifurcation almost exclusively along the world’s democratic divide. The uprisings against authoritarian rule in Tunisia, Libya, Syria, and Egypt were uniformly proclaimed as “expressing the will of the people,” while the strikingly similar manifestations of their Spanish, Greek, and American counterparts were all but ignored.⁵ This bifurcation in Western responses, equally evident in the responses of governments and the mainstream media, is indicative of how we have come to perceive the role of mass political protest in the first decade of the twenty-first century. In the tradition of the French Revolution, uprisings against authoritarian rule are signified as acts of popular sovereignty—legitimate manifestations of a people unable to express their will through alternate channels—whereas similar protests within liberal representative democracies are marginalized as the acts of a raucous minority.

Alain Badiou has correctly pointed out the irony of Western responses in this regard, which nominated 500,000 protesters in Cairo’s Tahrir Square as legitimate representatives of eighty million, when within their own societies, reasonable and legal people express their will through opin-

⁴ Among other things, then, this chapter also constitutes a certain critique of Francis Fukuyama’s celebrated thesis that liberalism had effaced all alternative universalisms in the global order, even before the Soviet Union actually collapsed. For the original argument, see Fukuyama, “The End of History?” *The National Interest* 16 (Summer 1989): 3–18.

⁵ For a sample of comments by US President Obama, see *White House Press Release*, February 13, 2011; “Obama: Meaningful transition in Egypt must start now,” *USA Today*, February 2, 2011. For the joint European response, see Eddie Buckle, “Merkel, Cameron, Sarkozy Urge Quick Transition to Broader Egypt Government,” *Bloomberg.com*, February 3, 2011, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2011-02-03/european-leaders-demand-immediate-regime-change-amid-violence-in-egypt>; Slobodan Lekic, “EU urges Egypt: Seek peaceful shift to democracy,” *Seattle Times*, February 1, 2011, <https://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/eu-urges-egypt-seek-peaceful-shift-to-democracy-1/>.

ion polls or elections.⁶ When similar numbers of Americans protested against the Iraq war in 2003, US National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice condemned the demonstrators to insignificance with a single sentence: “The protests will not affect our determination to confront Saddam Hussein and help the Iraqi people.”⁷ When things get a little nastier, participants of mass uprisings in the Global North are described as, to quote Erik Swyngedouw, “rebels, anarchists and, occasionally, as ‘scum’” and “every effort is made to assure that the ‘rioters’ are not identified with The People.”⁸ The most important effect of this split response, where mass protests against dictatorships take on world-historical significance while those within democracies go all but unrecognized, has been to obfuscate the global nature of these uprisings.

The second continuous refrain of the Western response was the repeated exhortation by Western governments to ensure an “orderly transition to democracy” in the Arab states.⁹ In one respect, this refrain can be viewed as a strategic attempt by the West to exercise some control over the events unfolding in the “Arab Spring,” to ensure that whatever emerged, the new shape of these societies would be both capable of, and amenable to, maintaining international political and economic commitments. But I argue that these statements, coupled with the differentiated response to mass uprisings along the democratic divide, are testaments to something much more profound, something that goes to the core of our collective contemporary understandings of revolution, democracy, and their epistemological relation.

The Western response to the global uprisings since 2011 has involved a recalibration of the terms *democracy* and *revolution*. First, and most obviously, it explicitly linked the two terms. As we shall see, this linkage has not only ruled out non-democratic revolutions, but also the possibility of revolution in liberal representative democracies. Second, the Western response has qualified this linkage by separating democracy, in both time and practice, from the revolutionary event that precedes it. In this manner, the Egyptian revolution might or might not lead to democracy, and would be

⁶ Alain Badiou, “Tunisie, Egypte: quand un vent d’est balaie l’arrogance de l’Occident,” *Le Monde*, February 18, 2011.

⁷ Karin Simonson, “The Anti-War Movement: Waging Peace on the Brink of War,” Paper prepared for the Programme on NGOs and Civil Society of the Centre for Applied Studies in International Negotiation, 2003.

⁸ Erik Swyngedouw, “Every Revolution Has Its Square,” *cities@manchester*, March 2011, <https://citiesmcr.wordpress.com/2011/03/>. On the notion of “the People,” see also Swyngedouw, “Interrogating Post-Democracy: Reclaiming Egalitarian Political Spaces,” *Political Geography* 30, no. 7 (2011): 374.

⁹ Michael Muskal, “Obama urges Egypt to go into transition process ‘right now,’” *Los Angeles Times*, February 4, 2011.

judged as a democratic revolution if and only if it resulted in the establishment of a representative democracy.¹⁰ In this view, the same will of the Egyptian people, expressed during the revolution through their occupation of Tahrir Square, would now be legitimately expressed through orderly polls and politics following the “transition to democracy.”¹¹ What historical circumstances brought about this simultaneous linking and separation of democracy and revolution? What are the effects of this linkage and separation on our understanding of these two terms? The answer to these questions lies in the revolutions of 1989 and the history of their interpretation.

The revolutions of 1989 and their afterlives inaugurated a historical taming of the term “revolution,” a taming that has continued into the twenty-first century. This historical taming consists of what I designate as two interrelated “police operations” conducted by Western liberal democracies: the first involving a particular conception of non-democratic revolutions, the second being a revisionist periodization of their own foundational pasts. Throughout this chapter, I use the term “police” in both a literal sense, as the cop on the street, and in a metaphorical sense, as an ideological apparatus allowing certain selected things to appear and others to remain hidden. The latter meaning is loosely modeled on Jacques Rancière’s notion of the term, which he equates with normal or non-revolutionary politics. As it applies to history, a police operation refers to the process by which the past is sanitized of all elements that underscore the contingency, or call into question the legitimacy, of the present. It is less about a forceful suppression of the past, about smashing windows, than it is about smoothing over bumps, an operation that allows us to see the past as seamlessly incorporated into the present.¹²

The first operation takes aim at the historical baggage acquired by the term “revolution” over the course of the twentieth century: the violent

¹⁰ For an example of this type of argument, see Lincoln Mitchell, “Revolution and Democracy in Egypt,” *Faster Times*, February 2011, <http://hdl.handle.net/10022/AC:P:11639>.

¹¹ Nevertheless, the Egyptian military’s ousting of the democratically elected president Mohamed Morsi, the failure of the Obama administration to label this a coup, and the token cuts in the vast amount of US aid given to the Egyptian military, all confirm the primacy of geopolitics over democracy on the part of Western states in the region. See “US withholds military aid to Egypt,” *Al Jazeera*, October 10, 2013, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2013/10/us-withholds-military-aid-egypt-201310920450117937.html>.

¹² See Jacques Rancière, *Disagreement: Politics and Philosophy*, trans. Julie Rose (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004). According to Rancière, the main function of the modern police is to keep people moving, to say there is “nothing to see here,” nothing out of the ordinary, nothing untoward or incommensurable, in fact, that nothing is happening.

overthrow of a political regime in an orchestrated action, commanded by a secular (as in Russia in 1917) or religious (Iran in 1979) vanguard. From a twenty-first-century perspective, these revolutions are increasingly judged not by what they achieved (the overthrow of the previous socio-political order), but by the new regime's convergence toward, or divergence from, a free market liberal democratic state. The same criteria that were used to assess the success or failure of the 1989 revolutions are now being applied to the revolutionary legacy of the entire twentieth century. In this way, the Russian and Iranian revolutions (and their offshoots) are increasingly qualified as failed or hijacked revolutions, tossed alongside the 1933 Nazi "revolution" into the dustbin of history. "Forget 1917, 1848 or 1789," Timothy Garton Ash aptly wrote during the height of the Egyptian uprising. "There is no longer any doubt that 1989 has become the early 21st century's default model and metaphor for revolution."¹³

The qualification of the term "revolution" by its future outcome forms the first of the ongoing police actions on the term. Specifically, all revolutions that have not led to a representative democratic regime thoroughly integrated into the world capitalist economy are increasingly assessed as revolutionary miscarriages. This action is to be fully expected, as it embodies the hegemonic appropriation of the past, in keeping with Fukuyama's post-1989 unipolar or uni-ideological world.¹⁴ Within political theory, it is the historical realization of Hannah Arendt's conception of revolution, one which privileges the political over the social and economic, and which sees the creation of the citizen-subject participating in the political sphere as the only legitimate and full realization of public freedom.¹⁵

The second police operation against the practice and historical facticity of revolution involves a reinterpretation of liberal democracy's own foundational past. It acknowledges the link between revolution and democracy, but does so through a periodization that temporally separates the two. This

¹³ Timothy Garton Ash, "Not 1989. Not 1789. But Egyptians can learn from other revolutions," *The Guardian*, February 9, 2013, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2011/feb/09/egypt-can-learn-from-europe-revolutions>.

¹⁴ Preference is given in this chapter to the term "uni-ideological," over the more common "post-ideological," in order to underscore a rather mundane point: that in the present period (beginning as early as 1968, and certainly by 1989), the absence of a concrete and credible alternative to a hegemonic ideology marks a moment not beyond ideology, but rather the moment that we have become more fully ensnared by it. See Slavoj Žižek, *First as Tragedy, Then as Farce* (London: Verso, 2009).

¹⁵ Or, in her own words, "Nothing, we might say today, could be more obsolete than to attempt to liberate mankind from poverty by political means; nothing could be more futile and more dangerous." Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* (London: Penguin, 1965), 114.

is especially true of the two foundational revolutions of the eighteenth century. The dominant narrative of both the American and French Revolutions acknowledges revolution as a period enabling, but distinctly preceding, democracy. Within this narrative, revolutionary acts from the Boston Tea Party and the Declaration of Independence, to the Tennis Court Oath and the storming of the Bastille, are given their due importance, but also separated from the actual functioning of democracy that followed them. The mass political uprisings that occurred after the establishment of democracy have, by this same narrative, been interpreted in a markedly different light. In the new American Republic, the crushing of the Whiskey and Shays' Rebellions are now seen as the (necessary) assertion of federal power and sovereignty, while in France the continued intrusions of the will of the French people into the National Assembly after 1789 are commonly cited as causes of the French Revolution's descent into demagoguery and terror.¹⁶

This periodization has had two major effects for our understanding of democracy, revolution, and their interrelation. First, it has effectively bracketed off revolution as a period of transition between a non-democratic past and a democratic future. Bookended by the old and new regimes, the time of revolution becomes momentary, a lightning strike that changes the affairs of human beings, and not a temporality that humans themselves inhabit.¹⁷ Second, it has constructed two different sets of rules and acceptable practices that apply separately to the transitional revolutionary period and the democratic regime that would follow it. This is especially the case concerning the fundamental issue of what does and does not constitute an act of sovereignty. One need hardly mention how the events surrounding July 4 and 14, self-nominated as the first sovereign actions of the American and French people respectively, would today constitute acts of high terrorism.

This dual standard is by no means a historical accident of modern representative democracy, but rather a contradiction fundamental to its operation. Mass rebellion against perceived injustice was immediately canonized as the foundational act of a democratic revolution, while subsequent iterations of the same act became criminalized within the newly emergent democratic state. This dual standard has historically allowed the elites of Western representative democracies to legitimate their governments as

¹⁶ For an early and influential transatlantic account reflecting this view, see R. R. Palmer, *The Age of the Democratic Revolution* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1970).

¹⁷ See Part III of Keith Baker, *Inventing the French Revolution: Essays on French Political Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 203–52.

being of “the people,” while simultaneously circumscribing all expressions of popular sovereignty outside of the new representative bodies which they themselves controlled.¹⁸ Policing this contradictory posture toward their past and present has been one of the constant historical tasks of liberal democratic regimes—amplified whenever a new generation of activists has invoked this revolutionary past to sanction their own (criminal) practices.¹⁹

So far, this chapter has outlined the avenues by which the term “revolution” has been historically tamed. It traced two police operations central to this taming, one qualifying revolutions by their future liberal democratic outcome, the other circumscribing revolution as an event or timeframe enabling, but preceding, the functioning of liberal democracy. Taken together, this two-pronged police action has turned contemporary revolutions into nothing more than the correction of an historical aberration, a momentary and bracketed upheaval directed toward regimes on the losing side of history, and judged according to the revolution’s successful subsequent institution of the world’s hegemonic political regime. One cannot discount the very real links between this epistemic policing and physical state action (classically seen, for example, in the COINTELPRO actions against the Black Panther Party).²⁰ In any case, the term’s roots in French intellectual history (seen through Althusser, Foucault, and Rancière) clearly imply the interconnectedness of both meanings—a connection also demonstrated historically by the aftermath of 2011–13.

The responses of Western governments and the mainstream media to the 2011 uprisings bear the markings of this police conception of revolution.²¹ The geopolitical bifurcation of the uprisings along the world’s democratic divide, as well as the repeated exhortations to authoritarian Arab

¹⁸ See Terry Bouton, *Taming Democracy: “The People,” the Founders, and the Troubled Ending of the American Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009); Paul Friedland, *Political Actors: Representative Bodies and Theatricality in the Age of the French Revolution* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2002); William H. Sewall, Jr., “Historical Events as Transformations of Structures: Inventing Revolution at the Bastille,” *Theory and Society* 25, no. 6 (December 1996): 841–81.

¹⁹ For perhaps one of the best examples of this dialogical encounter, see William F. Buckley’s 1973 interview of Black Panther Huey Newton on the television show, *The Firing Line*. “William Buckley interviews Huey Newton on Firing Line,” YouTube video, 5:05, televised by PBS on February 11, 1973, posted by “CE-Hitchens33,” June 26, 2009, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h4ypqCYPduI>.

²⁰ See, for instance, Joshua Bloom and Waldo E. Martin, Jr., *Black Against Empire: The History and Politics of the Black Panther Party* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014).

²¹ Noam Chomsky, “What makes mainstream media mainstream,” *Z Magazine* (October 1997).

states for an “orderly transition to democracy,” are testaments to the normalization (at least, officially) of the new conceptions of revolution, democracy, and their interrelation since 1989.

So far, this chapter has examined the policing of the category of revolution in the uni-ideological world since 1989. However, this is only half the story. The participants of the 2011 global uprisings have another story altogether, one that not only fundamentally disrupts this police conception of revolution, but also challenges the dominant form and practice of global contentious political struggle over the last half-century. To understand this story, we must take a closer look at the mass political protests of the twenty-first century and ask what is new about the global uprisings that began in 2011.

Social Movement vs. Social Arrest

To get an idea of what differentiates the 2011 uprisings from previous forms of popular political struggle, I want to start with a short vignette from a protest action that typifies how citizens of liberal democracies expressed extra-parliamentary discontent with their governments before the events of 2011.

The vignette is from an anti-war rally in Washington, DC, on February 15, 2003, where half a million Americans assembled to protest the US invasion of Iraq.²² They had bussed in from up and down the East Coast to gather, march, sing, and shout. Everyone was excited; there was a sense of collective energy, fueled in part by the sheer size of the demonstration. But then a curious thing happened. The march, whose time and route had been pre-planned and pre-approved, ended at two o'clock on the National Mall. Nothing else had been organized and the demonstrators, mulling around for a moment, began to disperse.

As the crowd thinned, I saw a group of young Middle Eastern men waving Palestinian flags, staring in confusion at an activists' table set up on one corner of the large grass field. Behind the table stood four rather skinny women; in front of it was a bright purple banner that read “modern dancers against war and anorexia.” The two groups—standing ten meters apart—looked at each other, in perhaps one of the most bizarre encounters in the history of social movements. The men particularly were dumb-

²² This march was one which I attended, one of over six hundred such demonstrations worldwide against the impending US invasion of Iraq, since dubbed by social movement theorists as the “the largest protest event in human history.” Stefaan Walgrave and Dieter Rucht, eds., *The World Says No to War: Demonstrations against the War on Iraq* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), xiii.

founded, literally unable to comprehend or give meaning to what they saw. Some distance behind them were a die-hard group of white Rastas chanting “show me what democracy looks like. This is what democracy looks like!”

Given the time and space, perhaps these human beings would have found that they had quite a bit in common. Perhaps they would have realized that their particular worldviews and languages were too far apart to share common ground. But the fact is that they had neither the time nor the space, and, after a few catatonic seconds, they all went their separate ways.

An odd scene, no doubt. But this anecdote underscores, albeit in hyperbolic fashion, the effective crisis in the theory and practice of social movements that defined the closing decades of the twentieth century—a crisis linked to the very category of motion itself. It was, as I will argue, the death rattle of a type of politics which—from the calls to abolish world slavery to the struggle for gender equality, from communism to civil rights—has defined contentious political struggle over the past two hundred years through the category of *movement*. Instead of asking what kind of movement the new uprisings of the twenty-first century represent, the time has come to review the relevance and efficacy of the term “movement” itself. To do so, the following section will reconsider, both epistemologically and in praxis, the *kinetics* of contentious political struggle.

Of course, this is not the first time that the category of movement has been called into question as the basis for contentious political struggle.²³ Despite these criticisms and appropriations, the term “movement” remains widely and often uncritically applied to all forms of contentious political struggle today. Yet what exactly do these movements move against? What constitutes the “adversary” (if one can speak in these terms) of modern social movements? The answer, for most of the history of modern social movements, has been the static, unmoving structure of the state.

One of the key images of the uprisings that brought down the Eastern Bloc was that of East Germans “voting with their feet,” moving across the Hungarian-Austrian border to the other side of the Iron Curtain. Nothing better encapsulates the kinetics of a struggle against the final bastions of an outmoded, oppressive, and above all static state structure than this image.

²³ The term’s association with historical progression has been deconstructed as teleological by Benjamin and other Western Marxists throughout the twentieth century. See Walter Benjamin, “On the Concept of History,” Marxists Internet Archive, accessed February 26, 2018, <http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/benjamin/1940/history.htm>. Perhaps more importantly, its appropriation by the restorative/conservative politics of the Right (from the infamous Nazi to the more recent Tea Party Movement) has severed any remaining links between the term “movement” and the progressive politics the term may have historically held.

Yet I argue that 1989, rather than serving as the model for future revolutions, in fact, stands as the last of the revolutions of movement.

This is because the adversary of contentious political struggle has itself undergone a gradual shift. To describe this shift, it is useful to revisit the notion of the police and discuss the changes in its social function. Forty years ago, the French philosopher Louis Althusser described how individuals are interpellated as subjects by the state. To illustrate his point, he gave the now-famous example of a police officer shouting out “Hey, you there!” in public. Upon hearing this exclamation, an individual turns around, and, “by this mere one-hundred-and-eighty-degree physical conversion, he becomes a subject.”²⁴ In the act of acknowledging that it is indeed s/he who is addressed (“arrested”), the individual thus recognizes their subjecthood.

Althusser’s image of the hailing of the police officer speaks of a state apparatus (and a correlative subjectivity) that is premised on the idea of arrest. The policeman’s shout essentially stops whoever hears it in their tracks, freezing the comings and goings of people. In twenty-first-century liberal democracies, this arresting function of the state apparatus, while by no means inoperative, has gradually been ghettoized (in that it has been pushed out of mainstream culture and squeezed into immigrant and minority communities). In its place, as Rancière has argued, has come an altogether different policing function, one encapsulated by the police officer urging bystanders to “Move along! There is nothing to see here.”²⁵ While the former is predicated on disruption, the latter must above all ensure the constant circulation of people, goods, and services: “The police say there is nothing to see, nothing happening, nothing to be done but to keep moving, circulating; they say that the space of circulation is nothing but the space of circulation.”²⁶ In this newer function of the police, whatever happens—whether a simple accident, an ethical dilemma over cheap clothes produced in sweatshops, or a mass protest—the role of the police is always the same: keep people, goods, and services moving at all costs. For Rancière, the police are less concerned with arrest and repression than they are with making sure that nothing appears which may itself arrest the functioning of society, cause society to pause.

The gradual reversal of the police function in recent years has, I argue, also changed the aim of contemporary political struggle. Slow food, conservationism (be it ecological or local-cultural), anti-war, anti-globalization, radical environmentalism—all of these sites and banners of contentious politics are directed not at a static state structure, but are in fact about

²⁴ Louis Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, trans. Ben Brewster (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1974), 174.

²⁵ Jacques Rancière, “Ten Theses on Politics,” *Theory & Event* 5, no. 3 (2001).

²⁶ Rancière, *On the Shores of Politics*, 172.

stopping or *arresting* an unbridled and accelerating capitalist system. In this light, the very names given to struggle—the environmental movement, the anti-globalization movement, the slow food movement—become at best oxymoronic, and at worst open to co-optation by the very forces they oppose (greenwashing, the fair trade industry, and so on). We need to ask ourselves: why do we—and should we—still use the term “movement” to characterize contentious politics? What political conceptions and practices does this term privilege? What forms and histories of resistance has it obfuscated?

Equally important to the epistemological question surrounding movement is a crisis in the practice of political struggle that the term has perpetuated. Here, the scene at the end of the 2003 anti-war rally on the Mall is a portrait of a larger problem. From licensed protests with pre-defined march routes to illegal direct actions, from flash mobs to the cyber-attacks of Anonymous, a logic of collection and dispersal has increasingly come to define how we practice social movements. Aggrieved humans momentarily gather, coalesce around some site or issue, then, all too predictably, re-atomize into their daily routines and routes of circulation and consumption. Besides the obvious point that these tactics have done very little to change the policies, much less the course, of contemporary society, we need to critically evaluate their affinity with the investment and withdrawal of international capital itself.

The police conception of revolution, and the crisis in theory and practice of social “movements,” form the dual backdrops for the global uprisings of 2011. Beginning in January of that year, a new form of revolt emerged in North Africa and spread, within months, around many parts of the globe. What actually took place at the sites of these revolts, in Zuccotti and Gezi Parks, in the squares of Tahrir, Plaza del Sol, and Syntagma, offered a seismic challenge to both the police conception of revolution and the theory and practice of political struggle. What happened in these squares was not movement but arrest, not dispersal but permanent occupation. The following two sections of this chapter will examine life in these occupied public places and show how they simultaneously created both revolutionary and democratic subjects.

The Democratic Space of Occupation

Starting on January 25, 2011, hundreds of thousands of people from all over Egypt descended on one square in Cairo and, moreover, decided to stay there. As the state apparatus withdrew (though not before committing over eight hundred murders), upward of a million people, left to their own devices, had to figure out how they would live together in a square in order to sustain a revolt aimed outside of it.

Alain Badiou once wrote that “in the midst of [a revolutionary] event, the people is made up of those who know how to solve the problems that the event imposes on them.”²⁷ The people of Tahrir organized and orchestrated their own security, dealt with their waste, and opened and operated a kindergarten so that mothers with small children could come to the square. They converted a Hardee’s restaurant into a free kitchen and a KFC into a free clinic, organized networks for digital and print information, set up a pharmacy, handled hired agitators, and protected each other’s religious practices.²⁸ It was in this manner that Tahrir Square became something more than a central site where a million atomized and individuated Egyptians came together to protest against their president. It became, through the life of the occupation, the stage on which the new Egyptian society was performed and presented. In their generosity, their tolerance, their humor, camaraderie, and song, the Egyptian people asserted their values and boundaries both to themselves and to the world. Surrounded by international cameras soaking up their every gesture, soldiers and children, artists and vendors, became increasingly aware that they were spotlighting what it meant to be an Egyptian, as if it were the opening ceremony of the Olympic Games of the new Egypt.

A few months later, a similar restructuring of social space took place in (lower) Syntagma Square, the heart of the uprising in Greece. The people occupying the square instituted nightly general assembly meetings, with various subcommittees to deal with food, protection, outreach, horticulture, information, tattoos, and media, creating plural (physical and conceptual) spaces informed by the uprising and redefining it daily. Yet perhaps even more telling has been the extreme detail the occupation paid to the structure of participation itself. In this respect, the minutes of the People’s Assembly of Syntagma Square make for fascinating reading.²⁹ These minutes devote as much attention to *how* political and social life should be structured in the square—the ban on party and union insignia, the drawing of lots and time limits governing speech in the assembly, the coordination of meetings with public transit providers to assure greater participation, etc.—as there is to the *what*: articulating political manifestos and the As-

²⁷ Badiou, “Tunisie, Egypte.”

²⁸ For an interactive graphical tour of the camp, see “Egypt unrest,” BBC, February 11, 2011, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-12434787>. On the protection of religious practices, see Helen Kennedy, “Muslims return favor, join hands with Christian protesters for Mass in Cairo’s Tahrir Square,” *New York Daily News*, February 7, 2011, <http://www.nydailynews.com/news/world/muslims-return-favor-join-hands-christian-protesters-mass-cairo-tahrir-square-article-1.137961>.

²⁹ See “Updates from the Greek squares and People’s Assemblies,” *Mute*, July 1, 2011, <http://www.metamute.org/community/your-posts/updates-greek-squares-and-peoples-assemblies>.

sembly's external positions (whether in relation to the protests in the upper square or to Greek society more broadly).³⁰

In the American Fall, similar scenes took place beginning on September 17, when an initial group of about 1500 people gathered to occupy Wall Street. Having found the street symbolizing global finance capital heavily barricaded by the police, they marched up Manhattan's financial district to Zuccotti Park. Instead of shouting and going home, the 1500 humans all sat down. Over the course of the next five hours, they broke up into small groups of fifteen to thirty people and began to talk to each other. They talked about what had brought them there and what they felt should be done. They collected their stories and ideas and presented them to the other groups in the first General Assembly meeting of the Park that evening. Through this talking with and talking through, Occupy Wall Street (OWS) was born.

Over the course of the following weeks, Zuccotti Park became both a site of protest against the hegemony of the financial sector, and a miniature form of the just American society in which the occupiers believed.³¹ The permanent encampment became a thorny injunction to the ceaseless traffic of goods, people, and transactions that defined lower Manhattan. Its kinetic structure was not one of movement, but one of arrest. The occupation forced one to stop, said, "look at what we have set up here."

Nearly two months later, at two o'clock in the morning on November 15, hundreds of New York City riot police descended on the park and brutally evicted the occupation. A partial list of the items they threw into waiting dump trucks includes:

³⁰ For a more in-depth description of the Assembly Movement in Greece, see "Preliminary notes towards an account of the 'movement of popular assemblies,'" *Libcom.org*, July 13, 2011, <https://libcom.org/blog/preliminary-notes-towards-account-movement-popular-assemblies-13072011>; Mark Purcell, *The Down-Deep Delight of Democracy* (Chichester, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013).

³¹ As with Tahrir and other global centers of occupation, Zuccotti Park was not immune to theft, sexual assault, and other transgressions. Two things need mentioning in this context. Firstly, such instances, unlike in their daily occurrence in the rest of American or Egyptian society, were openly confronted and denounced by the occupiers. Through this calling out, the occupiers established that rape and other violations had no place in the new society they were setting up. Secondly, these transgressions were also brought into the spotlight by media outlets either to discredit, but in most cases, to understand, the occupation itself. The language of lawlessness, a language provided by the police, was for many the only way to comprehend life in the occupied squares. See Alyssa Newcomb, "Sexual Assaults Reported in 'Occupy' Camps," *ABC News*, November 3, 2011, <http://abcnews.go.com/US/sexual-assaults-occupy-wall-street-camps/story?id=14873014>.

- ❖ 5554 books from the “People’s Library”
- ❖ Hundreds of musical instruments
- ❖ Three stationary bike generators (replacing the biodiesel generators previously removed by the NYFD)
- ❖ A fully working kitchen
- ❖ Over two hundred tents and air mattresses
- ❖ A Wikileaks truck³²
- ❖ A medical center
- ❖ Hundreds of children’s toys
- ❖ A greywater filtration system
- ❖ Three TVs, countless laptops, and a giant projection screen

To understand OWS and the other sites of global occupation, one needs to think about these items, to contrast them with the abandoned signs and cigarette butts that littered the Mall in Washington, DC, after the voluntary dispersal of the anti-war rally. In these destroyed items lay the true significance of the occupation. They stand as the material objects of an organic society instituting itself in democratic fashion.

Within two years, when large segments of the Turkish people had risen up against the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) government, the 2011 script had gone global. In the first week of June 2013, the actions taken by a coalition of activists against the destruction of a public park in central Istanbul spread to more than sixty cities and provinces, bringing several million people onto the streets. By June 8, the police had withdrawn from Taksim Square, leaving it temporarily in the hands of demonstrators, who erected networks of makeshift barricades at fifty-meter intervals along all major routes leading to the square. Within a week Taksim and the adjacent Gezi Park became a “liberated zone,” a fragile oasis amidst the ongoing and increasingly violent clashes with police forces throughout much of Turkey. Inside, the resisters set up a people’s library; dozens of free food, blanket, and medical supply stations; LGBT and gender awareness tents; and areas for musical performances and political speech. For the religious holiday of Kandil, protesters set up alternate spaces for prayer and dance, and invited all in the square to find a stranger with differing political beliefs with whom to sit and chat. These spontaneous structures and initiatives that mushroomed amidst the ubiquitous graffiti and political banners offered a stark contrast to the scripted choreography and corporate sponsorship of festivals previously organized in the square. More than an assertion of the right to the city, the self-

³² The Wikileaks truck was an art project by New York-based artist/activist Clark Stoekley. It had been camped outside of Zuccotti Park for two months, was confiscated by the police during the raid, and subsequently lost. See Adrian Chen, “NYPD ‘Loses’ the Occupy Wall Street Wikileaks Truck,” *Gawker*, November 22, 2011, <http://gawker.com/5861916/nypd-loses-the-occupy-wall-street-wiki-leaks-truck>.

organization of life in the square attests to the power of ordinary people to actively structure the social space itself.³³

This self-organization of life spread and became explicitly coordinated following the brutal police assault that cleared Gezi a week later. In the aftermath of this clearing, dozens of local decentralized parliaments bloomed in the neighborhood parks of Turkey's major cities, each holding nightly assembly meetings to discuss both local matters and their contribution to the national resistance. They organized free exchange days in the parks and a kilometer-long communal *iftar* banquet laid on newspapers to break the fast during Ramadan. In so doing, they adapted models of direct democratic practice popularized by the occupations in Spain, Greece, and the United States.

Stepping back to assess these uprisings globally, there is no question that their size, grievances, and government responses have varied considerably around the world. Rather than focus on these differences, I have tried to highlight a common form that has resonated through them all: the continuous occupation of public space. I have argued that the very practice of continuous occupation both necessitated and allowed for the restructuring of social relations and social space. In the following section, I will argue that this restructuring forms the essence of democracy.

The Birth of the Democratic Subject

The former Turkish president Abdullah Gül remarked in 2013 that “democracy does not mean elections alone”: a statement of the obvious, and the only one from the AKP leadership during the Turkish uprising to acknowledge the truth of the situation.³⁴ This section will detail how the global occupations since 2011 have reawakened the foundational and historical connection between mass popular uprising and democracy. In so doing, it will show how these occupations have fundamentally challenged the police conception of revolution outlined above.

There is no doubt that the Greeks, Egyptians, Americans, Spaniards, Tunisians, and Turks first occupied the public spaces of their urban centers to voice political opposition. They came, as Stathis Gourgouris has pointed out, to “withdraw their consent” from the forces governing their lives.³⁵

³³ Jay Cassano, “The Right to the City Movement and the Turkish Summer,” *Jadaliyya*, June 1, 2013, <http://www.jadaliyya.com/Details/28710/The-Right-to-the-City-Movement-and-the-Turkish-Summer>.

³⁴ “Turkish PM, President Clash Over Reply to Protests,” *Daily Herald*, June 3, 2013.

³⁵ Stathis Gourgouris, “Withdrawing Consent,” *The Immanent Frame*, February 15, 2011, <http://blogs.ssrc.org/tif/2011/02/15/withdrawing-consent/>.

They came to say that Egypt will be a place without Hosni Mubarak, America will be a place without the undue influence of Wall Street, and Greece will be a place without austerity. This withdrawal of consent forms the political component of the 2011 uprisings, without which there would have been no uprising at all. Sometimes this political component was quite clear and unequivocal, as in the unanimous refrains “Ben Ali, Out Out Out!” and “Hosni, Go Go Go!” Within the liberal democracies, the political message of the uprisings was harder to surmise, with its calls for a more decent society that, as the *Indignados* put it, treats its members as people, “not commodities.”³⁶ While both participants and commentators have rightly questioned the inadequacy of these political agendas (asking what was to come after the dictators, where were the explicit programs of socio-political change? etc), this focus on political articulation has taken attention away from the restructuring of social relations and social space within the squares themselves. As the days passed, people had to figure out how to live and act together inside a square, in order to sustain a revolt outside of it. In these sometimes very quotidian decisions, they came to define themselves by how they occupied and existed together.

This communal aspect of the occupations has gone almost completely unrecognized by the global mainstream media and governments, but it is in this aspect of the collective occupations of public space that democracy and revolution became conjoined. An eyewitness expressed this interdependence and simultaneity of democracy and revolution when he told the BBC, “Tahrir Square is the only democratic place in Egypt right now. And I constantly go there just to experience that freedom.”³⁷ This dual subjectivity (both revolutionary and democratic) was equally evident in the powerful statement of a young Egyptian who was among the first to occupy the square, “Starting today, 25th January, I take charge of the affairs of my country.”³⁸

This same refrain, heard countless times in Tahrir, was repeated a few months later by the People’s Assembly of Syntagma Square, whose May resolution read as follows:

For a long time decisions have been made for us, without us. We are workers, unemployed, retirees, youth, who have come to Syntagma Square to fight and struggle for our lives and our future. We are here because we know that the solutions to our problems can come only from us. We call all residents of Athens,

³⁶ “Indignados Take to the Streets in Spain,” *The Dissenting Democrat*, May 15, 2012, <https://dissentingdemocrat.wordpress.com/2012/05/15/indignados-take-to-the-streets-in-spain/>.

³⁷ Sarah Holmes, “Life in Tahrir Square,” BBC, February 11, 2011, http://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/worldhaveyoursay/2011/02/life_in_tahrir_square.html.

³⁸ Badiou, “Tunisie, Egypte.”

workers, unemployed and youth, to come to Syntagma Square, and all of society to fill the public squares and to take life into their own hands.³⁹

This resolution showed a striking affinity to the Declaration of the Central Committee of the 1871 Paris Commune, which had proclaimed, “The proletarians of Paris, amidst the failures and treasons of the ruling classes, have understood that the hour has struck for them to save the situation by taking into their own hands the direction of public affairs.”⁴⁰

The appropriation and redetermination of social relations forms a common thread across the global democratic divide. The occupations were just as much about setting up a new society as they were about criticizing the chains of the old one. Whether revolting against an authoritarian regime or a nominally democratic society that denied their existence, the occupiers of the world’s squares, through their very occupation, put into practice the democracy they believed should take its place.

It is this communal and democratic re-organization of public life that presents the greatest threat to the world’s states, whether they are “democratic” or not. More than any slogan or protest, these communal occupations challenge the state’s self-nominated role to regulate the lives of human beings on earth. They have shown, not by their words but through their daily actions, that a cross-section of humans not only have no need for the state, but in fact do a much better job of organizing life without it.

Enter the Police State

Authoritarian states have not taken this challenge lightly. The eight hundred plus murders committed by the Egyptian security forces unfortunately paled in comparison to the atrocities later carried out in Libya and Syria by Muammar Gaddafi and Bashar al-Assad respectively. Overt police brutality, by contrast, is usually the last resort of well-functioning liberal democratic regimes; it appears when the movies, the football rivalries, and the soul-deadening holiday music no longer suffice. Its entrance into the mainstream spotlight, in the United States, Turkey, Greece, and Spain, is an indication that the urban occupations pose a fundamental challenge to representative democratic states and the clearest signal that its “soft” ideological apparatus is malfunctioning.

³⁹ “Vote of The People’s Assembly of Syntagma Square,” P2P Foundation, June 1, 2011, <http://blog.p2pfoundation.net/vote-of-the-peoples-assembly-of-syntagma-square/2011/06/01>.

⁴⁰ Karl Marx, *The Civil War in France: The Paris Commune* (New York: International Publishers, 1979).

If, for example, OWS could simply have been incorporated into the liberal democratic system, effectively absorbed by a slight leftward shift in Democratic Party policy, there would have been no need for teargas, sonic cannons, and pepper spray. Yet, within two months of the birth of OWS and over a thousand sister occupations throughout the US, the federal government coordinated a collective assault on these democratic spaces. The FBI and the Department of Homeland Security, in conjunction with the mayors and police departments of over eighteen cities, forcibly evicted every major occupation throughout the United States.⁴¹ The same story has been repeated in the northern Mediterranean democracies, the most recent being the crackdown in Turkey, where over 120,000 gas canisters were fired in the span of two weeks. In addition to the reappearance of an increasingly militarized police force on the streets of representative democracies, the intelligence apparatuses of these states have engaged in more shadowy infiltration and surveillance of nonviolent “movements.” That the monitoring and entrapment of nonviolent dissidents has been funded and conducted under the banner of counter-terrorism taskforces is an even greater cause for alarm.⁴² These signs of an emergent police state within liberal democratic regimes (or, more correctly, its passage from shadowed ghettos to front-page visibility) are the strongest testament to the novelty and latent strength of the 2011 uprisings.

Though a sign of weakness, the state’s frontal assault on the global occupations has nevertheless been effective. Despite OWS’s new slogan following the evictions, “You Can’t Evict an Idea,” there is no denying that the police actions have been a severe setback. By dismantling their physical space, the state has in effect transformed the manifestation of direct democracy from the reality of the occupations to a homeless “idea,” an “idea” wandering through online fora and materializing in sporadic actions.⁴³ That is to say, the evictions of the protesters from urban squares transformed

⁴¹ Beau Hodai, *Dissent or Terror: How the Nation’s Counter Terrorism Apparatus, in Partnership with Corporate America, Turned on Occupy Wall Street* (Madison: DBA Press, 2013).

⁴² Naomi Wolf, “Revealed: how the FBI coordinated the crackdown on Occupy,” *The Guardian*, December 29, 2012, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2012/dec/29/fbi-coordinated-crackdown-occupy>.

⁴³ The standing-man protests in Turkey after the eviction from Gezi Park, and the Occupy Sandy relief effort in the United States, are two good examples of this trend. See Andy Carvin, “The ‘Standing Man’ Of Turkey: Act Of Quiet Protest Goes Viral,” *NPR*, June 18, 2013, <https://www.npr.org/sections/tetwo-way/2013/06/18/193183899/the-standing-man-of-turkey-act-of-quiet-protest-goes-viral>; Alan Feuer, “Occupy Sandy: A Movement Moves to Relief,” *New York Times*, November 9, 2012, <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/11/11/nyregion/where-fema-fell-short-occupy-sandy-was-there.html>.

these uprisings from a permanent occupation predicated on the logic of arrest, to the ephemeral tactics of collection and dispersal predicated on a logic of movement.

Towards A Global Script

Regardless of their final political fate, the global uprisings since 2011 have already established *mass continuous occupation of public space* as the dominant form of political struggle in the early twenty-first century: the coming together of people who have both withdrawn their consent to be governed by the existing order and, equally importantly, discovered the responsibility, dignity, difficulty, and, above all, joy of instituting a society outside of it. In so doing, they have challenged the periodization that separated a mass political uprising from the democracy that may follow it. The common feature of all these occupations was the creation of democratic forms within the space and time of the uprising itself. This was made possible, I argued, not through a politics predicated on movement, but rather one of arrest, of occupation, in order to create spaces and zones for the collective restructuring of social relations and space.

There is also no denying, however, that almost all of these uprisings have ended in failure. The urban occupations have been dismantled, and the aims of the occupiers have been largely ignored (as in representative democracies), brutally suppressed (Libya, Syria), or their victories shown to be premature (Egypt). Nevertheless, there are signs of hope. Contacts between the global occupations, formed during the height of the uprisings, have persisted after their evictions.⁴⁴

The common form of these occupations has allowed participants not only the opportunity to escape their individual isolation by talking and acting collectively, but more importantly, to draw connections across national grammars of discontent. There is an increasing recognition, evident in the many instances of Brazilian-Turkish solidarity, that peoples are engaged in a common global struggle. These connections have also drawn attention to the increasingly international nature of an emerging global police apparatus, encapsulated so perfectly by the photograph of a “made in Brazil” gas canister used by riot police in Istanbul, with its bitter irony sending it viral on both Turkish and Brazilian social media.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Online sites bringing together activists globally have proliferated since 2011. To name just a few, they include People’s Assemblies Network, TTS Take The Square International, Interoccupy, Democracia Real Ya!, and The Global Square.

⁴⁵ Bruno Fonseca and Natalia Viana, “Brazilian Tear Gas Used Against Turkish Protesters,” trans. David Bond, *Global Voices*, July 3, 2013, <http://globalvoicesonline.org/2013/07/03/brazilian-tear-gas-used-against-turkish-protesters>.

Whether these connections will be enough to dislodge future occupations from their national contexts toward a global uprising against the neo-liberal order and its police must remain, until it occurs, a speculative question. One thing, however, is certain: the 2011 uprisings that began in North Africa have already resonated across the world's democratic and income divides, forging connections between peoples and their circumstances that have not been made since 1989.

CHAPTER 9

Euromaidan and the 1989 Legacy: Solidarity in Action?*

Valeria Korablyova

*In a democracy, things happen by the
people, not to the people.¹*

Péter Nádas

Introduction

On November 30, 2013, the citizens of Ukraine woke up to a new country: early in the morning, a camp of student protesters was severely beaten and dispersed by the police, which in this post-Soviet country constituted an unprecedented use of force against a peaceful protest.² Throughout the day, people were discussing on social media the prospects of the country “turning into Belarus,” and a call for a public demonstration was launched. The next day, with mixed feelings of fear and determination, I entered a subway station to head to the center of the city to join the protest. Two seniors waiting for a train attracted my attention. They looked like average citizens, seemingly apolitical and more interested in fishing and caring for their grandchildren than following politics. One was telling his companion: “I told my [wife]: Hey, you should get your butt off the couch. Kids were beaten. We have no choice but to go out. We must show the authorities it’s unacceptable.”

When the train arrived, I found to my surprise that it was totally packed with people (unlike on any other Sunday). However, they behaved in an unusual manner, unexpectedly polite and caring for one another. At one

* This chapter was written during my tenure as a junior fellow at the Institut für die Wissenschaften vom Menschen (IWM), Vienna.

¹ Quoted in Attila Melegh, *On the East–West slope: Globalization, nationalism, racism, and discourses on Central and Eastern Europe* (Budapest–New York: CEU Press, 2006), 13.

² On November 21, 2013, on the ninth anniversary of the Orange Revolution, the then-Prime Minister of Ukraine Mykola Azarov announced that the signing of the Association Agreement with the EU would be suspended. That same evening, people started gathering on the Maidan, Kyiv’s main square, to protest against this decision. Those who went out decided to stay on the Maidan until the Agreement was signed. The uprising was not too crowded at first (besides the rally on Sunday, November 24, which accumulated some 100,000 people), and it consisted mostly of students and political activists.

point someone started singing the national anthem, and all those present joined him. That was my first experience of cathartic unity with fellow citizens. Upon my arrival at the destination point, I saw thousands and thousands of people carrying flags representing not only Ukraine, but also the European Union. Most of them looked surprised by the number of demonstrators, and expressed a calm, yet firm, resoluteness to make a difference. This sentiment was subsequently captured in the revolution's motto: "I'm a drop in the ocean that will change the country."

This is how the Ukrainian Revolution of Dignity began.³ Even today, several years after these events, not only their outcomes remain unclear, but also their very content is still discussed within drastically diverse frameworks: from glorifying Ukrainian "freedom fighters" to blaming a right-wing military coup d'état. Quite symptomatically, two documentaries on the Euromaidan emerged in its aftermath, triggering scholarly discussions in public media.⁴ Existing critiques stress—and often rightly so—that the Euromaidan not only unified the country, but also produced new ruptures in Ukrainian society by excluding those who did not share its values and visions. The Euromaidan was not merely an assembly of peaceful citizens from different social groups and country regions; it also involved right-wing radicals. Finally—and probably most importantly—existing critiques emphasize that the protesters' hopes went unfulfilled, as the country has not been reformed as the protesters expected; the old political system has been preserved, with only a slight change of public faces. All of these remarks, however apt, only reveal the complexity of the phenomenon and underscore the need for important clarifications, without detracting from the unprecedented character of the uprising.

My task here is to focus on the Euromaidan itself rather than reckoning with its outcomes, be that the annexation of the Crimea and the warfare in

³ The Ukrainian uprising in 2013–2014 has a double labeling: initially, it was termed the *Euromaidan* (to stress the core goal of signing the Association Agreement with the EU and promoting a European path for Ukraine's future); later, after the student protesters were beaten, and the uprising's participants and political demands became more diverse, it was renamed the Revolution of Dignity. The latter notion has no clear origin, but according to the testimonies it emerged during the rally on December 1. However, both terms have been kept till now, as this double-naming exposes dignity as one of the core European values, vital for contemporary Ukrainians. Throughout this text, I also use the short form "Maidan" to designate the uprising, as the previous "Maidan" in 2004 was usually designated in Anglophone literature as the Orange Revolution.

⁴ Here, I have in mind the Netflix Oscar-nominated documentary "Winter on Fire: Ukraine's Fight for Freedom," by Evgeny Afineevsky, and the scandalous documentary "The Masks of the Revolution," by French filmmaker Paul Moreira, aired on the popular Canal+ network.

Donbas, or the larger challenges to the global world order. The main claim is that the Euromaidan was a *misinterpreted revolution*, misjudged by the consequences it triggered.⁵ And in this unfortunate destiny, it shares some legacies with the velvet revolutions of 1989 in East-Central Europe, erroneously treated as a sign of the “end of history” and the establishment of a unilateral world under American hegemony.

A number of scholarly works aimed at revising the lessons of 1989 appeared in the 2000s, and may be of use for tackling recent Ukrainian events.⁶ This chapter takes up, in particular, the arguments of Paul Blokker and Jonathan Schell. As Blokker stresses, “The year 1989 is, however, not reducible to a mere confirmation of a universal status of liberal democracy, rather, a reverse reading—i.e., the recognition of the emergence of innovative, radical democratic ideas and practices from the East—is equally important to do full justice to the complex events of 1989.”⁷ Meanwhile, Schell has inscribed both the velvet revolutions of the late twentieth century and various Ukrainian events of the early twenty-first (focusing especially on the Orange Revolution) in a chain of worldwide nonviolent protests that affirm popular power. He explicates how Václav Havel’s “power of the powerless” overcomes the “powerlessness of the powerful.” Due to a temporary “reversal of power” (borrowing from Hannah Arendt), the *vox populi* “turn[s] out to be a superpower in its own country.”⁸

And yet, when the extraordinary conditions end and the situation returns to “normalcy,” authorities catch on to the victory and deprive the people of their political agency. Protesters lose not only leverage in their country’s governance, but also the monopoly over interpreting the very events that they themselves have enabled and engendered. As such, the stakeholders—both domestic and global—ultimately reframe the uprising according to their own agenda, thus dismantling the event’s peculiarity and authenticity.

To disentangle these issues, I begin with the special traits of the Euromaidan that have been mostly overlooked. Then I examine the legacy of the East-Central European “1989” in the Euromaidan of 2013–2014, with a particular emphasis on the notion of solidarity. I will attempt to articulate

⁵ For a different approach, see, for instance, Marci Shore, *The Ukrainian Night: An Intimate History of Revolution* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2018).

⁶ The discussion is presented in (but certainly not reduced to) the special issue of *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society*, “1989 and Beyond: The Future of Democracy” 22, no. 3 (September 2009).

⁷ Paul Blokker, “Democracy through the Lens of 1989: Liberal Triumph or Radical Turn?” *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society* 22, no. 3 (2009): 273–90, at 273.

⁸ Jonathan Schell, “The End of the Age of Empire,” *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society* 22, no. 4 (2009): 421–25, at 422.

the “solidarity proposal” embodied in the mentioned revolutions. I then proceed with a comparison of these events’ perceptions in different “camps” and *topoi*. The chapter’s conclusion reflects on what the legacy of 1989 in the Ukrainian Maidan means for the more general prospects of the “solidarity proposal” in Europe’s future.

Euromaidan: pretexts and contexts

A book of personal accounts of the Maidan opens by invoking the following figures:

Martin Luther King’s speech “I Have a Dream!” near the Lincoln Memorial in Washington in 1963 was listened to by around 250,000 protesters. On November 20, 1989, between 200,000 and 500,000 people gathered in Prague during the Velvet Revolution. Even the fall of the Berlin Wall was accompanied with more moderate actions, compared to Kyiv. The famous Salt March of Mohandas Gandhi in the spring of 1930 lasted less than a month and never attracted over 100,000 protesters. The Ukrainian *satyagraha* outnumbered, by its mass character, anything of its kind that had previously happened in world history.⁹

Analytically relevant as these global antecedents are, the Euromaidan had a closer predecessor of domestic origin, namely the Orange Revolution in 2004, which engaged one in five Ukrainians and produced a huge wave of hope, both at home and abroad. Yet this hope quickly changed into huge disappointment: its political hero Viktor Yushchenko failed to meet the people’s aspirations in reforming the country, and what is worse, the deeds and actions of the Orange team enabled a revanchist comeback by his erstwhile opponent, Viktor Yanukovich, in 2010. The failure of the Orange Revolution had twin consequences for the follow-up events: on the one hand, civil society in Ukraine was strengthened by the experience of a successful revolt against political authorities, yet on the other, the Orange Revolution exposed the illusiveness of hopes for radical change via revolution. As a result,

the Ukrainian political space converted itself into a “conservative situation.” . . . This general situation has come to be known as dystopia or anomie. As a dystopia, Ukraine has found itself in a place where any developmental impulse dies before it can set in motion a mechanism of irreversible change. As a state of

⁹ Tetiana Kovtunovych and Tetiana Pryvalko, eds., *Maidan vid pershoji osoby: 45 istorij Revolutsiji Gidnosti* [The Maidan in the first person: 45 stories of the Revolution of Dignity] (Kyiv: K.I.S., 2015), 7.

anomie, Ukraine resides in a place where the values that make possible the act of social solidarity do not operate. Distrust, suspicion, and mutual disrespect make the Ukrainian dystopia a foundation of conservative beliefs.¹⁰

Strikingly enough, neither sociologists nor political leaders could predict any mass revolts on the very eve of the Euromaidan. Thus, a sociological survey conducted throughout Ukraine by the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology (KIIS) from November 9 to November 20, 2013, showed that 56 percent of Ukrainians were *not* ready to participate in any mass protests, whereas only 22 percent claimed the opposite. Even those who were potentially ready to protest mostly specified such forms as collective appeals (13.4 percent) and sanctioned rallies and demonstrations (12.3 percent). More active and illegal forms of protest were feasible for *fewer than 5 percent of respondents*: participation in strikes (4.5 percent); unauthorized meetings and demonstrations (3.4 percent); boycotts (2.8 percent); picketing government agencies (1.7 percent); hunger strike (0.6 percent); occupying buildings (0.5 percent); creating armed forces independent of, and unauthorized by, the government (0.4 percent). Quite symptomatically, the lowest level of protest intentions was recorded in eastern Ukraine, where only 16.7 percent claimed to be ready to participate in at least one form of protest. Compared with the data of similar surveys in the past, sociologists found a *declining trend* of protest intentions. Thus, while in December 2004, 36 percent of respondents had expressed their willingness to participate in actions of social protest, by February 2009 that same metric had dropped to 32 percent; by February 2011, to 25 percent; and all the way down to 22 percent in the middle of November 2013.¹¹

It is commonly disregarded that, during the decade separating the two Maidans—the Orange Revolution in 2004 and the Revolution of Dignity in 2013–14—there was a proliferation of other “Maidans” in Ukraine, revolts by specific social groups against egregious public injustices. Examples include the Vradiivka revolt against the impunity of police criminals, the so-called Tax Maidan against new tax policies, and so on. However, none of these movements could grow more broadly (unlike, for instance, Occupy Wall Street) because they involved separate social groups.¹² Their successive failures also contributed to a growing pattern of hopelessness and lack of confidence in changes.

¹⁰ Mikhail Minakov, “The Language of Dystopia: The Ideological Situation in Ukraine,” *Russian Politics and Law* 49, no. 5 (2011): 43–54, at 45, 47.

¹¹ “The readiness of the Ukrainian population to participate in actions of social protest (before 20th November, 2013),” Kyiv International Institute of Sociology, accessed April 22, 2018, <http://www.kiis.com.ua/?lang=eng&cat=reports&id=214&page=18>.

¹² See Mehmet Döşemeci’s chapter in this volume.

In many memoirs of Euromaidan participants, one can find the same observation that, by the time the uprising actually began, no one believed that such a thing was possible. As journalist and blogger Andriy Kapustin expresses it:

The repetition of the Orange Revolution seemed impossible. It was obvious given the inertial character and total hopelessness of the [political] opposition—the pieces, debris, wreckage of the Orange team—and the fact that nothing appeared instead. The Parliament of 2013: that was a catastrophe, notwithstanding the miserable remnants of some liberal and democratic forces. Besides, by that point, the main opposition leader Tymoshenko was in jail. You should add here pocket courts [*kyshen'kovi sudy*], increasing signs of forming a state that was, if not totalitarian, then very autocratic . . . Add the passivity of people, due to the lack of trust in these politicians, to all their lousy attempts in producing the appearance of a struggle for truth. Moreover, presidential elections were coming, and a second term for Yanukovych seemed very feasible. All of that, against the absence of any equally competitive candidate, left no hope that the second Maidan could sparkle. Actually, it was obvious, and this skepticism did not disappear on November 21 when we went out.¹³

The Euromaidan emerged as a spontaneous revolt, neither planned in advance nor orchestrated during the process. Its spontaneous character is central to understanding both its internal logic and its subsequent processes of self-organization. It was triggered by the Yanukovych regime's violent actions against the student protesters, yet the groundwork was laid by previous developments dating back to when Yanukovych took office as president in 2010. As Andrew Wilson notes:

Yanukovych may have won a free and fair election, but then he unconstitutionally aggrandized his power. What he did next with all his extra power was even worse. . . . [He] acted more like an Asiatic despot: everything was organized vertically. Immediately below him was family and his inner mafia circle; then below them, various sycophants. . . . Political power was ruthlessly centralized, and so was corruption. And once it came to be increasingly monopolized by the "Family," it exploded in scale.¹⁴

As such, general levels of popular dissatisfaction and frustration had been growing against the backdrop of citizens' decreasing leverage over the elected authorities. At the beginning of the Euromaidan, Yanukovych was still the legally elected president, though with a highly questioned legiti-

¹³ Kovtunovych and Pryvalko, *Maidan vid pershoji osoby*, 23.

¹⁴ Andrew Wilson, *Ukraine Crisis: What It Means for the West* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2014), 51, 53.

macy. Here is the explanation provided by one of the Maidan protesters, a businessman from Odessa, Kostiantyn Ivanov:

In a way, for the last four years I'd dreamt to go out to oust these authorities, and I was not alone. I was not ok with what these authorities had done to the country, and indirectly to me. I'm a businessman and managed to become quite relaxed between 2004 and 2010. Although there was a world financial crisis, it was a calm and quiet time. There was no need to fight back, whether with bullets or with rubles. But when these guys came to power, a real hell arose. For four years I was not working, but fighting. The mood of the people was similar. Even before the students were beaten, I was ready to protest with civilized means; but after the dispersal, something changed. . . . It belongs to the category of things that must not be ignored—otherwise you'd be crying into a pillow for the rest of your life.¹⁵

Ivanov's comments illustrate perfectly the most widespread motivation for Ukrainians to go out and engage with the Euromaidan. Sociological surveys show that respondents' main reasons to join the protest included the repressions and brutal beatings of demonstrators (69.6 percent), Yanukovych's refusal to sign the Association Agreement with the EU (53.5 percent), a widespread desire to change life in Ukraine (49.9 percent), a desire to change the country's political leadership (39.1 percent), a backsliding of democracy and the danger of dictatorship (18.9 percent), and the danger of joining the Russian-sponsored Customs Union, with its concomitant turn back to Russian hegemony (16.9 percent).¹⁶ Here it is worth noting that different options for the country's future path were usually understood not from a pragmatic perspective, but rather as a civilizational, or even existential choice. As Olaf Klemmensen, a writer and artist from Donbas, puts it,

For us Europe is not what Europe actually is. For Ukrainians, Europe is a New Jerusalem, you understand? Well, it's a dream. For Ukrainians, Europe is a concept, I'd say, an eschatological one, or something similar to it; how Christians perceive the Promised Land, the New Jerusalem. It's like the Exodus of the Jewish people from Egyptian captivity. That's the context, more or less. And I was interested in the European concept on the level of some mythological experience . . .¹⁷

¹⁵ Leonid Finberg and Uliana Holovach, eds., *Maidan: Svidchennja. Kyiv, 2013–2014* [The Maidan: Testimonies, Kyiv, 2013–2014] (Kyiv: Duh i Litera, 2016), 763–64.

¹⁶ "Maidan–2013," Kyiv International Institute of Sociology, accessed April 22, 2018, <http://www.kiis.com.ua/index.php?lang=eng&cat=reports&id=216&page=5&t=13>.

¹⁷ Finberg and Holovach, *Maidan*, 359.

Kostiantyn Ivanov tackles the same issue in a more down-to-earth way:

In Ukraine's current situation, choosing between integration into the Customs Union or the EU—and I'm not a big fan of either—I'm definitely choosing the EU and ready to promote this idea. . . . Because the EU is not profitable and is unpleasant in some ways, but the Customs Union is terrifying. Not in the panicked, animal sense, but it's absolutely not a situation I want to give to my child. In this classic antagonism between the "sausage for 2.20 rubles" and freedom of speech, I choose the latter. We'll earn money for sausages in some other way. Any form of political rapprochement with Russia is a total taboo for me.¹⁸

Unlike previous, failed Maidans, the Euromaidan of 2013–2014 proved able to unite most of the country's population with a simple slogan—to an Anglophone reader, perhaps reminiscent of Peter Finch in the 1976 film *Network*—"We're fed up! We can't stand it any longer!" Against the backdrop of corrupt authorities, severe violations of human rights, a dysfunctional judicial system, and a significant decrease in the quality of life and future prospects, this sort of "general strike" across Ukrainian society stood out as an *ultimate measure of direct democracy*. In other words, collective mass protest represented the only way in which the Ukrainian people could reconsider the existing social order, drawing on its constitutional status as the ultimate source of power.

Euromaidan as a social structure:

"I'm a drop in the ocean that will change the country"

One of the most specific traits of the Euromaidan movement was its social structure: it had no recognized leaders, but instead consisted of multiple interconnected networks built on functional differentiation. It was a horizontal "multitude," to use Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's terminology, trying to combat a strongly entrenched vertical hierarchy of power: a mafia-like "family" drawn from the post-Soviet nomenklatura.¹⁹ The Orange Revolution in 2004 was, in many ways, about personalities: two camps of supporters, devoted to two respective political parties organized roughly around two political leaders (Yushchenko and Yanukovych respectively), were easy to distinguish. In contrast to this, the Revolution of Dignity was driven by an ethos, not personalities, while being socially and politically heterogeneous and far more inclusive.

¹⁸ Ibid., 763.

¹⁹ See, for instance, Piotr H. Kosicki and Oksana Nesterenko, "Eastern Ukraine Has Been a Mafia State for Years: Can Kyiv Break the Cycle of Violence?" *The New Republic*, June 5, 2014.

So, first and foremost, the Euromaidan had no distinct leaders. The “official” opposition—consisting principally of Arseny Yatsenyuk, Vitaly Klitschko, and Oleh Tyahnybok—may have been accepted as negotiators on behalf of the Maidan. In practice, however, these men had very little influence on realities on the ground: the events on the eve of Yanukovych’s escape are particularly telling.²⁰ The so-called Council of the Maidan, which featured a broader representation of opinion leaders, likewise followed rather than led. The whole movement was aimed at keeping agency as broad as possible, rather than choosing clear frontrunners. This persistence of social power at the grassroots level was often regarded as a weakness of the Euromaidan, a sign of its political immaturity. Both Ukrainian and foreign officials demanded for negotiators to be empowered as decision-makers who would be capable of controlling and channeling the movement; again and again, these demands were frustrated.

In reality, this very fact turned out to be a prerequisite of the Euromaidan’s victory. First, it hindered the ascendance of bribery and blackmail as means of disbanding the movement. Otherwise, the likelihood of an opaque and vague agreement reached by self-empowered leaders with the then-authorities would have grown substantially; the outcome for the country in general would have been, at best, the retention of the status quo, and more likely a worsening of conditions. Second, it was an embodiment of an up-to-date social structure relevant for the globalized world of flows and flexible networks, which proved its efficacy on many levels. Within these three-plus months, the popularity of numerous individuals grew, and upon gaining this symbolic capital they were elected to the Parliament in 2014. However, they mostly turned out to be ineffective, some even being implicated in bribery scandals, while others simply showed their abject ignorance of policy and thereby failed to make any difference. These individuals made a difference within the spontaneous order of the Maidan network. Yet when the trappings of this symbolic representation fell away, they lost most of their power. This shift in 2014 partially explains the political deadlock that followed the Maidan’s public victory: what worked during a revolt could not be a model for state governance. In the end, all the power went back to political elites strongly interested in maintaining the old order, at best the one of the pre-Yanukovych era.

From the very beginning, the Euromaidan stood as an inclusive project, open to everyone sharing its values and aspirations. Representatives of dif-

²⁰ On February 21, 2014, the representatives of the political opposition, with foreign officials serving as intermediaries, signed an agreement with Yanukovych calling for preliminary presidential elections by December 2014. When political leaders came to the Maidan and announced the results, protesters refused the agreement, and one of them, Volodymyr Parasyuk, went on stage and presented an ultimatum to President Yanukovych.

ferent regions and social groups were gathered on the Maidan, with some of the most striking (and widely cited) examples coming from ethnic and religious minorities.²¹ It is widely known that Ukraine's Jewish and Tatar communities declared their support for the Maidan. Along the same lines, representatives of almost all mainstream churches were present, officiating services in a shared space, an ecumenical chapel. The first victims shot by the riot police were a Belarusian citizen, Mikhail Zhiznevsky, and a Ukrainian citizen of Armenian origin, from the Donetsk region, Sergey Nigoyan. As Bohdan Kucher, a student from Kyiv Pedagogical University, recalls:

There were diverse people, from ultra-leftists to the extreme right; there was a lot of everything mixed and intermingled. And it was indeed good, as these were the popular masses. That's how the revolution breathed, that was its strength, and this power brought the action to the end, to the logical endpoint of bearing fruits. Those who officially represented groupings were marginal, in the context of the revolution, compared to the great popular masses capable of transformation. And that's a strong argument in favor of the point that it was neither organized in advance nor thought through by someone.²²

Critics of the Euromaidan often picture it as the revolt of a creative class, similar to the Bolotnaya Square case in Moscow, thereby claiming that it did not represent Ukrainian society in general. However, testimonies of participants suggest a much more complicated self-understanding. Yevheniy Utkin, a businessman of Russian origin, observes:

For me the most interesting discovery on the Maidan involved these simple, wise people who were present throughout. I remember Volodya from the Rivne Oblast, such an elderly man . . . he once said that he had lived his life, but wanted his grandchildren to live in a decent country, and for that he was ready to give his life. . . . We were all humans. Seniors who came were cooking food, as were students, different other people; everyone was helping. And to say that it was the revolution of the middle class. . . . No. It was a revolution of decent people. I met hundreds of absolutely simple people, "from the plowtail" as they say, and they were so wise, there was so much sincerity and comprehension of the values we were standing for, both in their words and, most of all, in their actions. . . . It was impossible to fool these people.²³

Undoubtedly, there were representatives of cultural and business elites as well: top managers, artists, academics, singers, and many other professions. However, rather than attempting to take over the revolutionary vanguard,

²¹ It is worth noting that the uprising was widely supported throughout the country (and abroad), and local "Maidans" were launched in different cities and regions.

²² Kovtunovych and Pryvalko, *Maidan vid pershoji osoby*, 55.

²³ *Ibid.*, 112, 113.

they followed a common pattern of behavior, contributing to the common goal by doing what they knew best. When any person or group joined the protest, they were not given orders, but instead decided among themselves what they could do and what responsibilities they could take on. Immediately following the dispersal of the students' camp, lawyers launched an initiative of legal support for the victims; later, they focused on defending arrested demonstrators in the courts. Restaurant owners offered free coffee, tea, and food to protesters, spontaneously providing space for makeshift hospitals or storage. IT specialists activated free Wi-Fi hotspots and provided outlets for charging electronic devices, while bloggers live-streamed the ongoing events. Doctors provided medical treatment on site, which came to include—as the attacks on protesters began—serious operations and defibrillation. This was a vital service to the protesters; as police began arresting victims undergoing treatment in state hospitals, it became too dangerous for them to go there. HR specialists made lists of incoming people and connected them with one another according to skills or needs, helping to find accommodation or transportation. Car owners launched the “Automaidan” initiative that concentrated on political actions outside the Maidan area, including transporting protesters to rallies held in front of the authorities' private houses (usually in the countryside). Intellectuals analyzed the unfolding situation, presented different scenarios and possible strategies. Priests opened a small chapel in one of the tents, where representatives of various denominations conducted services and addressed the spiritual needs of the protesters.

Eventually, a parallel society with a quite differentiated structure emerged. It contained various, functionally specialized, institutions: for safety and internal affairs (Self-Defense), for fundraising and professional assistance (Euromaidan SOS), for diplomacy (the Council of the Maidan), for information policies (InfoResist), for external actions and communication (the aforementioned Automaidan), as well as special units for medical care, food supplies and provisions, and even for educational and cultural needs (libraries, the Open University of the Maidan). Although every unit was initially founded in response to a pragmatic need (for food, warmth, protection, and so forth), eventually these diverse groups connected and grew into a real polis that stood in opposition to the rest of Ukrainian society beyond its virtual boundaries. Oleksandr Zinchenko describes the latter on the eve of the Maidan: “Both in 2004 and in 2013, one could say that the police did not guard, the medical system did not cure, and the state power did not guarantee citizens their rights.”²⁴

The Euromaidan was a model antagonist to such a society: people were performing tasks for which they had volunteered, and they did so profes-

²⁴ Ibid., 7.

sionally, honestly, and willingly, without striving for material benefits. A deeply solidaristic—and, from a classically liberal standpoint, irrational—economy emerged, as participants tended to give rather than get, expecting nothing in return. As Sergiy Pitik, a businessman, recalls, “I spent around 100,000 UAH [Ukrainian hryvnia, about \$12,500 at that moment] on supporting the Maidan: that’s what I spent on kitchens, electric generators, food, and other assistance. All my hundreds of friends, especially those who had their businesses, paid for everything themselves while also maintaining everything. In other words, it was all paid for with popular contributions.”²⁵

Two stories appear throughout participant accounts, each telling on its own, but especially so when paired. One is about an old lady who brought to the donation point a small package of food: several apples, cookies, and a piece of sausage. In an interview, a volunteer reports her impression at the time that this small amount of food must have been all the lady had.²⁶ Another story is about a Bentley car used to fortify one of the barricades. When the owner was interviewed, he claimed not to be disappointed with the use of his car in this way, as he supported the Maidan’s ideas.²⁷

These narratives might be framed as an embodiment of the “gift economy,” widely theorized in the anthropological literature throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries—from Marcel Mauss, through Jacques Derrida, to Kojin Karatani and beyond.²⁸ The main policy was to give what one could, without any expectation of reciprocity or profit. Throughout the country Ukrainians made donations and brought food, clothes, and medications to local camps. As the months passed, supplies became more diverse, including wood, helmets, wires, metal barricades against armored vehicles, and so on. All of these examples expose the prevalence of common good over personal greed as the core of the Euromaidan movement. And it perfectly fits into what Kojin Karatani calls “mode of exchange D,” which he theorized would supersede late capitalism. This new type of social and economic relationship is based on the “*pure gift*” with no reciprocity expectation, thus constituting a “process that is in equal measures economic and moral.”²⁹ Karatani claims that such a pattern existed at earlier stages in

²⁵ Ibid., 107.

²⁶ *Winter on Fire: Ukraine’s Fight for Freedom*, directed by Evgeny Afineevsky, October 9, 2015, <https://www.netflix.com/hu/title/80031666>.

²⁷ “Bentley Flying Spur ‘ukrepil’ barrikady na Maidane” [Bentley Flying Spur “fortified” barricades on the Maidan], *Auto RIA*, January 29, 2014, accessed April 23, 2018, <https://auto.ria.com/news/events/211788/bentley-flying-spur-ukrepil-barrikady-na-majdane.html>.

²⁸ Kojin Karatani, *The Structure of World History: From Modes of Production to Modes of Exchange* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2014); Pierre Rosanvallon, *Le Capitalisme utopique: Histoire de l’idée de marché* (Paris: Le Seuil, 1979).

²⁹ Karatani, *The Structure of World History*, xix.

anthropological development, in nomadic tribes, where individuals were economically equal by virtue of being free—that is, freely mobile. These relations might exist even in the modern world, connecting individuals unbound by the strictures of exclusive identification with their respective states or communities.

Seen through Karatani's framework, the Euromaidan suggests a certain return of these patterns in our contemporary, globalized, neo-nomadic epoch, perhaps pointing to a means of overcoming consumerism and anomie, with an eye toward a Kantian "kingdom of ends." However, Karatani follows Kant in asserting that such a "kingdom" cannot be achieved without war, uprising, and the renegotiation of basic social norms. This transition should be driven by a "regulative idea," a "transcendental illusion," or "forward dreaming." This theoretical framework seems a fitting way to understand the Maidan events. In this context, it is perhaps even more surprising that the Maidan was almost totally rejected by the global Left as a "neoliberal plot." On the contrary, the Euromaidan showcased counter-neoliberal practices overturning market rationality, a proposition mostly overlooked by observers and interpreters.

"Solidarity of the shaken": Maidan and Solidarność

The Polish journalist Paweł Bobołowicz was in Kyiv almost from the very beginning of the uprising:

On the Maidan there was an extraordinarily significant solidarity among journalists. First and foremost, I was struck by the solidarity of my compatriots. When we work in Poland, we work apart. One can say that journalists are egoists chasing the news, and no one ever calls their colleagues saying, "You know, there is something going on." Everyone keeps news for themselves. And there we were working together, protecting ourselves together, helping each other, and giving information to each other. The same applied to Ukrainian colleagues, and Russian ones as well. . . . It was very interesting and very pleasant.³⁰

"Solidarity" was not heard on the streets in 2013 as a keyword of the Ukrainian revolution—that keyword was, if anything, "dignity"—yet the spirit of solidarity was definitely alive, and it was decisively *opposed to fear and distrust*. The political situation prior to the eruption of the Euromaidan revealed the inability of any particular individual to effect change and, therefore, to govern his life autonomously in an environment defined by a deadlock imposed from above. But the act of constituting a joint effort in this direction provided hope. Sociological data show that around 92 per-

³⁰ Kovtunovych and Pryvalko, *Maidan vid pershoji osoby*, 29.

cent of Maidan participants did not belong to any organized movement; moreover, 20 percent of them came out *alone*.³¹ These people were exposed to unknown others whom they had no choice but to trust; a common threat and a common hope bound people together. This presumption of trust, unknown in pre-Maidan Ukraine, made change possible. There are many examples of this solidarity in action. As Yevheniy Utkin mentions, “at the screams of ‘Berkut!’ [riot police]—one might think that upon hearing the signal of coming danger, people are supposed to run away, but here it was the other way around.”³²

The first attempt at a forced dispersal of the non-student Maidan happened late at night on December 11, 2013, when the First Vice-President of the European Commission, Catherine Ashton, came to Kyiv to negotiate with President Yanukovych. The latter needed to prove that there was no Maidan and, therefore, no issue to discuss. Few people were staying on the Maidan for the night; they were unarmed and helpless in front of the police troops. Someone called to the bell ringer from St. Michael’s Golden-Domed Monastery asking him to ring all the bells, which he did. Such an alarm had not been used since 1240, when the Mongol-Tatars invaded Kyiv. Yet Kyiv’s inhabitants recognized the sign, and began arriving on the Maidan. As the world-renowned novelist and essayist Oksana Zabuzhko recalls, “at this moment the whole city woke up, at least men—those who consider themselves to be men—quickly got up from their beds and—screaming ‘What the hell!’—rushed over there.”³³

The notion of solidarity can be difficult to pin down semantically.³⁴ Overloaded with diverse connotations, it might be deeply misleading. Several points of reference are essential here. One is the French Revolution’s motto, in which “fraternity,” or “brotherhood,” is still the most underrepresented and misinterpreted part. As Jean-Luc Nancy aptly remarks,

Today, fraternity is not often considered benevolently—at least not in France—as it is felt to carry too much of a sentimental, not to say familial connotation. . . . Jacques Derrida . . . more than once expressed his mistrust

³¹ “Vid Maidanu-taboru do Maidanu-sichi: shcho zminilosia?” [From Maidan camp to Maidan *sich*: what has changed?], *Fond “Demokratichni initsiatiivi imeni Il’ka Kucheriva*,” February 6, 2014, archived March 15, 2016, <https://web.archive.org/web/20160315043907/http://dif.org.ua/ua/events/vid-ma-zminilosj.htm>.

³² Kovtunovych and Pryvalko, *Maidan vid pershoji osoby*, 112.

³³ *Ibid.*, 300.

³⁴ I would like to thank here Ludger Hagedorn for productive discussions at the Patočka Reading Group meetings at the IWM and, more specifically, for drawing my attention to the 2015 special issue of *Baltic Worlds* (8, nos. 1–2) dedicated to the solidarity concept.

of a term that is simultaneously familial, masculine, sentimental, and Christian-sounding. . . . [T]he use of this term by a candidate in the French presidential election [Nicolas Sarkozy] some years ago . . . revived all the mistrust towards a word considered to be moral rather than political, and sugary rather than responsible.³⁵

In modern and contemporary European history, however, there is an even clearer reference point for “solidarity” than the French Revolution: the Polish trade union movement of the same name, founded in August 1980, in opposition to communist rule. *Solidarność* became an object of worldwide admiration because it served as an example of nonviolent, successful protest; in effect, it became one of the principal causes of the Soviet Bloc’s demise.³⁶ The notion became so emblematic in this context that some post-1989 public intellectuals have claimed a level of Polish monopoly over the concept, which is completely at odds with its very figure and spirit.³⁷

Finally, there is a narrow legal and economic interpretation of “solidarity” dating back to ancient Roman law, in which obligation *in solidum* implied joint liability for a financial debt. In the contemporary world, it usually denotes some financial losses due to sympathy with an external other, be it the “solidarity tax” for rebuilding eastern Germany, economic sanctions against Russia as a sign of solidarity with Ukraine, or quotas for accepting refugees as a demand for intra-EU solidarity. It typically presupposes an asymmetrical relationship, which can manifest as othering, imposition, and conversion of moral obligations into a financial burden.

However, what I imply in attributing “solidarity” to the Euromaidan is not a collective obligation, but rather a long-term personal endeavor. It is a *self-binding commitment built on trust and responsibility*, which, while being shared with other individuals, stands as the foundation of a community. My understanding of solidarity in the twenty-first-century Ukrainian context follows Jan Patočka’s notion of the “solidarity of the shaken,”³⁸ while also clearly preserving the legacy of the velvet revolutions of 1989 in East-

³⁵ Jean-Luc Nancy, “Fraternity,” *Baltic Worlds* 8, nos. 1–2 (2015): 98.

³⁶ See Adrian Guelke and Tom Junes’s chapter in this volume.

³⁷ On March 2, 2016, there was an international conference held at the Diplomatic Academy of Vienna entitled “25 Years of Visegrad Cooperation: A Growing Power Within The EU,” during which a Polish scholar claimed that no one could teach the Poles what solidarity was about.

³⁸ Marci Shore also uses Patočka’s language to describe the Euromaidan. This chapter, however, was prepared in 2016, two years before the publication of Shore’s book, and our respective usages of the term differ and have emerged separately. Compare with Shore, *The Ukrainian Night*, 105–110.

Central Europe.³⁹ Ludger Hagedorn explains how such a “thickened” notion of solidarity serves as a basis for active engagement in the construction of the social community:

Our colloquial notion of solidarity still tends to oscillate between these two extremes: between a juridical obligation and a free gesture of moral commitment and support for somebody or for the “good cause”—the meanings are rarely found in their purest form, uninfluenced by each other, but it is undoubtedly the second usage (the free commitment) that we would call an act of solidarity in the primary sense.⁴⁰

Yet there is also a grammar to solidarity that must be uncovered to fully explain the Euromaidan ethos. Following Leonard Neuger, Hagedorn marks it as “solidarity for,” which is:

a risky and dangerous undertaking; it cannot build on any pre-established ground. It operates on a “groundless ground,” trying to be open for that which is different and goes beyond the current order. . . . Showing this kind of solidarity makes the individual vulnerable and dependent on others. One becomes dependent on trust and mutual responsibility. . . . Solidarity also seems to presuppose a mutual commitment—mutually binding and mutually emancipating.⁴¹

This was the type of solidarity espoused by a cross-section of Ukrainian society. Its members included, among others: successful businessmen abandoning their everyday routine to stand, day and night, on the Maidan; established doctors who helped their wounded compatriots on Hrushevsky Street while risking their lives; recognized lawyers who spent dozens of sleepless nights in courts and police departments trying to get protesters out of danger; and thousands of ordinary citizens who went out wearing ski helmets, or even colanders, on their heads when the dictatorship laws were passed illegally in the Ukrainian Parliament on January 19, 2014. All these people voluntarily left their comfort zones and, in many cases, their nicely settled lives for the sake of each other. This, too, was the basis on which they sought to rebuild their country’s future.

This type of social agency harnesses the ethos of 1980s East-Central Europe. Václav Havel recalls the preceding events, in 1968, to expose how people were changing themselves in order to change their countries:

[W]hen the tanks indeed rolled in, our amazement was accompanied by a nationwide resistance, not of a military kind, but one characterized by a peculiar urban folklore. The cities were full of protest banners, people helped each

³⁹ On the concept, which I will discuss later in detail, see Gustav Strandberg, “The Solidarity of the Shaken,” *Baltic Worlds* 8, nos. 1–2 (2015): 101–2.

⁴⁰ Ludger Hagedorn, “Introduction: Solidarity beyond exclusion,” *Baltic Worlds* 8, nos. 1–2 (2015): 87.

⁴¹ Hagedorn, “Introduction,” 87, 89.

other, even thieves in prison issued a statement that they would no longer steal. I spent the first days of the occupation in Liberec, and I saw how the local hippies—the scourge of the town—came to the Town Hall and offered their services to the head of the Town Council. They were given the task of taking off the street signs, as it would not have been appropriate for the police to do that. In the course of the night the task was accomplished, and by morning all the street signs were piled in the corridors of the Town Hall, and the leader of the group asked for their next task. So it was a fabulous time.⁴²

Just over a decade later, Timothy Garton Ash called the Solidarność movement “the revolution of the soul,” while claiming that no prior revolution was driven to such an extent by ethical categories and moral goals. In Garton Ash’s parlance, solidarity in Poland lay not only in the movement’s slogans, or the realm of “theory,” but primarily in the practical deeds and actions of revolutionaries. These came “not only at the outset but throughout the revolution.”⁴³ Unlike the Ukrainian revolution of 2013–14, while solidarity was the emblematic notion, dignity was widely implied. Garton Ash quotes a hand-painted banner in the Polish town of Ustrzyki Dolne that read, “We don’t care about life / the pig also lives / we want a life of dignity.”⁴⁴

Before either Havel or Garton Ash put pen to paper, however, the renowned Czech phenomenologist Jan Patočka introduced the notion of the “solidarity of the shaken.” This idea applied more to warfare than to revolution, yet it became emblematic across the region during the velvet revolutions of 1989. Twenty-five years later, it also captured the essence of the Ukrainian situation, stressing both ruptures in the usual flow of history and a need for solidarity between the people caught in these ruptures. The great philosopher defined the solidarity of the shaken as:

the solidarity of those who are capable of understanding what life and death are all about, and so what history is about. That history is the conflict of *mere life*, barren and chained by fear, with *life at the peak*, life that does not plan for the ordinary days of a future but sees clearly that the everyday, its life and its “peace,” have an end. . . . All who betray this solidarity must realize that they are sustaining war and are the parasites on the sidelines who live off the blood of others.⁴⁵

⁴² Elżbieta Matynia, “Twenty Years Later: A Call for Existential Revolution: Václav Havel in Conversation with Adam Michnik,” *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society* 22, no. 3 (2009): 255–62, at 256.

⁴³ Timothy Garton Ash, *The Polish Revolution: Solidarity 1980–82* (London: Jonathan Cape Ltd., 1983), 282.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 283.

⁴⁵ Jan Patočka, “Sixth Essay: Wars of the Twentieth Century and the Twentieth Century as War,” in *Heretical Essays in the Philosophy of History*, trans. Erazim Kohák and ed. James Dodd (Chicago: Open Court, 1996), 134–35.

Perception: misinterpretations and wrong lessons

One can hardly claim that the events of 1989 were underestimated either in terms of their peculiarity or their global importance. At the same time, many dubious conclusions and erroneous lessons have been drawn from them. Probably the most distinctive and influential of these was the “end of history” claim by Francis Fukuyama.⁴⁶ The American thinker saw in the velvet revolutions both a prerequisite to, and a sign of, the Soviet Union’s historical defeat in the geopolitical realm, and the disappearance of communist doctrine in the global domain of ideas. That, in turn, supposedly proved that liberal democracy represented the zenith of humankind’s ideological evolution, thereby implying the coming monopoly of US-style democracy.⁴⁷

The basic assumption of such a systematic misreading of the Soviet Bloc’s collapse was underdevelopment theory. “Cold War triumphalism” simultaneously implied discrimination, a sort of Orientalism toward post-Soviet Europe. In other words, Western observers failed to acknowledge that something brand-new and worthy on a global scale was happening in East-Central Europe. After all, the revolutions were not only aimed against the Soviet system. As Václav Havel put it, “[i]s not the grayness and emptiness of life in the post-totalitarian system only an inflated caricature of modern life in general? And do we not in fact stand (although in the external measures of civilization, we are far behind) as a kind of warning to the West, revealing to it its own latent tendencies?”⁴⁸

The revolutions of 1989 were not an affirmation of the supremacy of the Western political system, but rather an alternative to the West. Protesters in East Berlin and Prague were not emulating any political or social pattern from outside the Soviet Bloc, but instead elaborating their own transnational modes of resistance. The East-Central European model of 1989 barely fits into liberal democracy, as it presupposes a far bigger role for people, rather than their representatives or the state. There are several ways to label this model, including: radical democracy (Ernesto Laclau, Chantal Mouffe); civil democracy (Pierre Rosanvallon); self-democratizing civil society (Andrew Arato); or even performative democracy (Elżbieta Matynia).

At the same time, the resistance was contemporary in the fullest sense. As such, it is not productive to regard it as a repetition of something well-

⁴⁶ Francis Fukuyama, “The End of History?” *The National Interest* 16 (Summer 1989): 3–18.

⁴⁷ See also Věra Exnerová’s and Samuel Helfont’s chapters in this volume.

⁴⁸ Václav Havel, *The Power of the Powerless: Citizens Against the State in Central Eastern Europe*, trans. John Keane (London: Routledge, 1985), 145.

known, an application of old models to a peripheral region. On the contrary, it was a response to contemporaneity, with all its attendant challenges, and it should therefore be examined as an authentic contribution to political theory and political practice. As Paul Blokker formulates it:

The understandings of 1989 as either a mere rerun of, or fulfilling of, 1789, in terms of a catching up of East-Central Europe with the achievements of the Enlightenment and the French Revolution, as in Habermas, or as a reminder of latent Western traditions, as in Ackerman, do not do justice to possible elements of uniqueness of the event of 1989 and the ideas that informed it, as well as its reposing of the innate problems of political modernity.⁴⁹

The misreading of 1989 had far-reaching consequences for normative political theory, world geopolitics, and the EU project. First and foremost, it provided the United States with *carte blanche* for the forcible export of democracy, which led to disastrous outcomes in Kosovo, Iraq, and elsewhere. In so doing, both the antagonists and supporters of the US government usually start with the same erroneous assumption that denies the agency of local protesters and exaggerates the might of the US in a conspiratorial manner. Jonathan Schell aptly remarks, "The mistake was also evident . . . in the ubiquitous idea that the end to the Cold War had left the world with a 'sole superpower.' The way to this conclusion had been prepared by the misunderstanding that it was the 'super' type of power . . . not popular power, that had won the Cold War. . . . Democracy was confounded with imperialism—a fatal confusion, especially for democracy."⁵⁰

In her thorough analysis, Barbara J. Falk divides the American reading of 1989 into ten "wrong lessons," from which she constructs a well-deserved critique of US foreign policy. Falk rightly points out that the popular focus in the US—supported by experts and the media alike—was exclusively on the "peaks" of tension. This, in combination with a general ignorance on the matter and an excessive concentration on the Kremlin, overshadowed long-term developments on the ground and downplayed people's agency:

"the mobilizational moment" that 1989 represented must be interpreted as . . . the end of a very long process entailing numerous cycles of dissent and crackdown. And even in this very last cycle, mass mobilization was *internal* and Moscow's puppet leaders throughout the region had a combined unwillingness and inability to crackdown without *external* support, that is, from the Soviet Union itself.⁵¹

⁴⁹ Blokker, "Democracy through the Lens of 1989," 276.

⁵⁰ Schell, "The End of the Age of Empire," 423, 424.

⁵¹ Barbara J. Falk, "1989 and Post-Cold War Policymaking: Were the 'Wrong' Lessons Learned from the Fall of Communism?" *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society* 22, no. 3 (2009): 301.

Falk criticizes the “end of history” approach for underestimating ascriptive characteristics, like ethnicity and religion, which have gained increasing importance against ideological cleavages. The recent rise of nativism and xenophobia seems to be proving this grim prediction, confirming the insights provided by Samuel Huntington, Ken Jowitt, and other theorists. Yet I would argue that Fukuyama should be criticized by sticking to the ideal approach rather than by rejecting it. The importance of an alternative vision for the future should be reaffirmed. It must diverge from “the theoretical poverty and moral relativism of Kissingerian or neostructuralist realism,”⁵² and its germs can be found in the experiences of the 1980s in East-Central Europe.

To understand the long 1989 story, it is crucial to keep in mind the peculiarly Western European reading of 1989. In his landmark book *Inventing Eastern Europe*, Larry Wolff reveals the Enlightenment roots of the Orientalist ideologeme of “Eastern Europe.”⁵³ Its echoes can be found also in Attila Menegh’s “East-West slope.”⁵⁴ As I argue elsewhere, misrecognition of the authentic contribution of East-Central Europe to the modern democratic project has resulted in its covert discrimination as a community of European “pariahs.”⁵⁵ This may be one of the underlying reasons for the recent anti-EU turn across the region.

Today, normative political theory faces the challenge of worldwide democratic decline: low electoral turnouts, low levels of popular political engagement, and internal corrosion of the system, or the de-democratization of democracy, in Wendy Brown’s terms. The long 1989, seen especially in the light of its Euromaidan legacy, reveals the lack of comprehensive alternatives to “classical” liberal democracy. The democratic experience of East-Central Europeans in the 1980s, if properly evaluated, might have contributed significantly to new directions in political theory.

Strikingly enough, history repeats itself in the case of the Maidan. The events of 2013–2014 have been commonly misinterpreted as a battlefield between the West and Russia, where Ukraine is perpetually objectified. From the Western standpoint, Ukraine becomes a test case for the limits of liberal democracy’s expansion, while for Russia it is a chance at historical revenge for the outcome of the Cold War. The Euromaidan was, in a way,

⁵² Falk, “1989 and Post-Cold War Policymaking,” 296.

⁵³ Larry Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1994).

⁵⁴ Attila Melegh, *On the East-West Slope: Globalization, Nationalism, Racism, and Discourses on Central and Eastern Europe* (Budapest-New York: CEU Press, 2006).

⁵⁵ Valeria Korablyova, “Pariahs and parvenus? Refugees and new divisions in Europe,” *Eurozine*, November 26, 2015, accessed April 23, 2018, <https://www.eurozine.com/pariahs-and-parvenus/>.

a post-colonial revolution aimed at overcoming the Soviet past,⁵⁶ self-liberation from Russia's imperial claims, and reclamation of the "kidnapped West." However, it also confronted neoliberal rationality and suggested an ideological alternative to the current Western social and political system: a peculiar configuration of individualistic communitarianism, grounded in a flexible network structure of self-bound responsible individuals. Therein lies the potential for a solution to dilemmas highlighted by critics of modernity and postmodernity from Jean Baudrillard to Peter Sloterdijk. At the same time, the Euromaidan became an "existential revolution" built on the desire "to live in truth" (as Havel brilliantly put it), which simultaneously overcomes the simulative society of postmodernity and the "anemic society" of late capitalism.

The model of "civil democracy," as it emerged in the 1980s in East-Central Europe, presupposes a bigger role for civil society (the power of the people) while restraining the state. It has important implications for the democratic imaginary and for the renewal of modern democracy. Its rebirth within the Ukrainian Maidan might be regarded, in Lacan's terms, as the "return of the repressed," another historical chance to learn a lesson properly. Moreover, the Ukrainian version implied a much more developed horizontal dimension, the power of networks with no recognized leaders. The core question is whether this "solidarity proposal" from the East of Europe is capable of animating people's hearts and invigorating the democratic project in a united Europe.

⁵⁶ See, for instance, Ilya Gerasimov, "Ukraine 2014: The First Postcolonial Revolution, Introduction to the Forum," *Ab Imperio*, no. 3 (2014): 22–44.

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